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AUTHOR Brooks, Michelle; Hamann, Louise; Vetter, Mary
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ABSTRACT

A program was designed and implemented to improve student vocabulary and comprehension. The target population consisted of 59 students in grades 1, 2, and 3 in a low-income area of a large city in central Illinois. The problems of lack of prior knowledge, poor vocabulary, and insufficient comprehension were documented through data collected from standardized tests and teacher assessments of student performance. Results from analysis of probable cause data indicated that students lack exposure to print and basic reading and comprehension strategies. Due to lack of parental support and unstable family life, many students have limited experiences and limited prior knowledge, resulting in inadequate language and vocabulary development. A review of solution strategies suggested by literature and an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the selection of thematic literature units to expand prior knowledge, reading strategies, vocabulary, and comprehension. Findings from post intervention data suggest that direct instruction, through thematic literature units, resulted in a steady growth in vocabulary by the students. Students developed increased understanding of the literature with a majority of the students scoring in the upper quartile on the comprehension test. Students also exhibited improved interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. (Contains 19 tables of data and 25 references; appended are sample assessment forms, stories, tests, student journals and learning logs, and quilt blocks used as visual clues. (Author/CR)

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ED 410 535

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT IN AT-RISK STUDENTS

Michelle Brooks
Louise Hamann
Mary Vetter

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This project was approved by

Priscilla Stuebing Ed. D.
Advisor

Barbara K. Nunley
Advisor

Beverly Gurley
Dean, School of Education

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improving student vocabulary and comprehension. The targeted population consists of second, third, and fourth grade students in a low-income area of a large city in central Illinois. The problems of lack of prior knowledge, poor vocabulary, and insufficient comprehension are documented through data collected from standardized tests and teacher assessment of student performance.

Analysis of probable cause data reveals that students lack exposure to print and basic reading and comprehension strategies. Due to lack of parental support and unstable family life, many students have limited experiences and prior knowledge resulting in inadequate language and vocabulary development.

A review of solution strategies suggested by literature and an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the selection of thematic literature units to expand prior knowledge, reading strategies, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Post intervention data indicated that direct instruction, through thematic literature units, resulted in a steady growth in vocabulary by the students. The students developed increased understanding of the literature with a majority of the students scoring in the upper quartile on the comprehension test. Students also exhibited improved interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

Problem Statement

The academic achievement of the targeted group of primary students, in the areas of reading comprehension and vocabulary development, is insufficient, resulting in low scores in reading and the content areas. Evidence was gathered from standardized assessments that indicate student academic performance, teacher observation and assessment, and student performance in the content areas.

Immediate Problem Context

The targeted primary school is located in the southern part of a large urban area in the Midwest. The surrounding neighborhood consists of older, primarily rental, homes. Most of these homes are classified as single family residences. Nevertheless, many homes contain more than one family or large extended families.

The original part of the targeted school structure is one of the oldest schools in the district. This original portion, constructed in 1914, remains much the same as it did 82 years ago. Additions and improvements to the structure were made in 1931, 1949, and 1992. The building is maintained in good physical condition. The excessive number of students currently being housed in the structure put a strain on the facilities. Every room is being utilized. Some personnel currently have to provide instruction in what was originally meant to be closets and storage areas.

Students attend the targeted school from pre-kindergarten through fourth grade. The school houses 25 self-contained regular division classrooms and 6 self-contained special education

classrooms. The school has an educational staff of 52. In addition to classroom teachers, the faculty consists of an administrator, an administrative assistant, two speech and language therapists, a "Success For All" reading facilitator, two full time certified reading tutors, a support classroom facilitator, a full time home/school facilitator, six reading recovery/classroom teachers, two physical education instructors, a full time music teacher, a part-time orchestra teacher, one learning disability resource teacher, three classroom aides for special education classes, a librarian, a parent/teacher library aide, and a computer technology aide. The racial/ethnic composition of the staff is 87% Caucasian and 13% African-American. Forty-seven percent of the faculty has a Master's Degree, 16 % are currently working toward their Master's Degree, and all have taken advanced hours. The average number of years taught is l4 and ranges from 2 to 37.

Of the 650 students currently enrolled in the targeted school, 574 are regular division students and 76 are full-time special education students. In addition to the full-time special education students, the learning disability teacher works with 24 students on pull-out or inclusion programs. The average class size is 24 students. Seventy-five percent of the student population is African-American, 23 % is Caucasian, and 2% is Hispanic. The gender of the student population is nearly equal.

Each year the state issues a district/school report card. The information and statistics found in the local report card for 1995 have been used in this project to describe the conditions of the targeted school and district and their populations. (School Report Card, l995, p.1-6).

Eighty-three percent of the students at the targeted school qualify for free or reduced-priced breakfast and lunch. Sixty-nine percent come from single-parent households and nine percent are in foster care. Due to the large percentage of low income students, the targeted school is classified as a Title I school. This makes all of the students eligible for Title I services.

Mobility is an important factor in the lives of many of the students. Forty-three percent of the students moved during the 1994-95 school year. This rate is lower than last year, but higher than

the district average of 31%. The students move often, but their daily attendance at the targeted school is high compared to similar schools within the city. Student attendance rate at the targeted school is 92.4% compared to 92.1% for the district. The chronic truancy rate is 2.8% compared to 4.9% for the district. All students attending the targeted school live within a 10 to 12 block radius of the school. However, because a major traffic route dissects the attendance area, 60% of the students are bussed. This easy access to school greatly influences the attendance rate. To further improve attendance rates, the school has implemented, as a component of the "Success For All" program, a new attendance procedure. In cooperation with Project Target, a government program aimed at reducing truancy, families who have habitual attendance problems are being monitored, counseled, and then taken to court if the problem does not improve.

The students have many problems which make it difficult for them to succeed. Twenty percent of the students have at least one retention and more than 80 students have been diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Students enter school with a lack of experiences, educational and social, that limit their prior knowledge. Data from the Iowa Test of Basic Skill shows that many of the students come to school as much as two years behind in development. This lack of basic skills greatly affects the student's performance in all areas. Iowa Test of Basic Skills results show that in the area of reading comprehension, the targeted students in grades two, three, and four are in the 25th percentile or below. In the area of vocabulary development, the students fall in the 23rd percentile. Most students do show growth each year, but most never seem to overcome the deficits with which they enter school.

Because teachers make every effort to keep parents informed about their children's progress, about 91% of the parents have made at least one contact with the student's teacher during the past year. Many positive interactions occur during parent-teacher conferences, but far too many contacts must be made in regard to inappropriate student behavior.

Many of the students come from homes with a lack of trust for school and adults. Many come from a home environment where adult figures are, at times, unreliable, unresponsive, abusive, or

ill-equipped to meet their child's needs. Some come lacking the most basic needs of food and clothing. A large number of older students are responsible for getting younger siblings up, fed, dressed, and escorted to school. Violence in the home and neighborhood, substance abuse by immediate and extended family members, and gang pressures are also factors that students must contend with daily. These conditions cause many of the students to be disruptive, defiant, unmotivated, and demanding of attention. As a result, approximately 25% of the students have been referred to the principal's office for behavior problems. Of that 25%, almost half have been suspended. Such behaviors challenge the classroom teacher's ability to provide instruction and the student's ability to succeed academically.

Reading is the most important part of the school program. In order to address the ongoing problem of low reading scores and poor vocabulary development, the targeted school has implemented a reading program called, "Success For All." This program, developed by Slavin, Madden, Dolan, and Wasik, in conjunction with Johns Hopkins University, is a "schoolwide restructuring program for elementary schools serving many students placed at risk. The program emphasizes *prevention* and *intensive intervention* to ensure that all students read adequately in the early grades" (Johns Hopkins University, 1995). The program is researched-based, provides extensive professional development, uses a variety of activities to address multiple intelligences and learning styles, and has literature, reading and writing components. Cooperative learning is the driving force behind the "Success For All" curriculum. Ninety minutes of each day are devoted to this program throughout the school. During reading periods, students are grouped across age lines so that all students are reading at the level where they can achieve success. This grouping allows the teacher to give more intensive, direct instruction. Each class consists of approximately 20 students. One-on-one tutoring is one of the most important components of the program. Every eight weeks children are assessed to check progress. Children are regrouped, lower or higher, where they will be successful. Certified teachers work with students in grades

one to three who are failing to keep up with their classmates within the reading classes. Approximately 20 students at the targeted school receive this tutoring daily.

In addition to the "Success For All" tutors, the school has six reading recovery teachers. Reading Recovery is also a program of intervention for students experiencing difficulty in reading during their first year. Twenty-four students receive individualized instruction for one half hour each day through this program. The tutors in both programs work together to try to help as many students as possible.

The students get additional literature exposure through a computer program called Accelerated Reader. This program uses trade books as a basis for improving and assessing student reading comprehension. Because the computer lab has only 18 computers, all children in a class cannot work at the same time. Most children receive 40 minutes per week of computer experience. The district has a large variety of computer programs, other than Accelerated Reader, available for use. The students cannot benefit from information available on the internet because the building has only two telephone lines to serve about 700 people.

During the past year, the district adopted a new manipulative, problem-solving based mathematics program. Future plans are being made to implement new social studies, language arts, and science curricula into all the schools.

The Surrounding Community

The targeted primary school is part of a large urban unit district. The entire district serves approximately 16,200 students. It incorporates 4 secondary schools, 12 middle schools, a middle school for gifted students, 14 primary schools, and a K-8 magnet school.

There are 1,032 teachers within the district. The racial/ethnic background of teachers is 92.3% Caucasian, 7.0% African-American, 0.4% Hispanic, and 0.4% Asian. The teachers in this district have an average of 13.8 years of experience. Fifty-four percent have Bachelor's Degrees and 45% have a Master's Degree or higher. The pupil-teacher ratio is 19.7: 1 for elementary

schools and 18.1:1 for secondary schools. The pupil-administrator ratio is 236.6:1. The average teacher salary is $34,361; approximately $5,000 below the state average.

The district has a student racial/ethnic breakdown of 48.4% Caucasian, 48.0% of African-Americans, 1.8% Hispanic, 1.7% Asian, and 0.1% Native American. Operating expenses per pupil are $5,556; about $150 below the state average. The district has an average attendance rate of 92.1%, a student mobility rate of 31.1%, and a chronic truancy rate of 4.9%. Fifty-three percent of the students are from low-income families (families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches).

The targeted school is located in a city with a population of 113,500. Fifteen years ago, the economy of the community was based on one company. A long strike and massive layoffs following the strike left the community devastated. Thousands of people left the area. A prevalent saying around the city at the time was, "The last one out, turn out the lights."

Despite the dire predictions of 15 years ago, the city has recovered and continues to grow. The major company and its support companies are still very important to the city. A strike by the employees of the major industry during the past two years, that lasted almost a year and a half, did not have the impact on the community's economy that previous strikes have had. A wider variety of heavy and light industry, more service and technology oriented companies, and expanding medical treatment centers have broadened the economic base of the community.

The cost of living in the city is well below the national average. The median family income within the city is $33,500. However, this statistic does not show the vast range of incomes within the community. The median income of the families in the targeted school neighborhood is approximately $15,500 per year, which is among the lowest in the city. Forty-two percent of the families in the neighborhood live at or below the poverty level. Those families with a female head of household with children under 18, have an average poverty rate of 80% (Department of Planning and Growth Management, 1993).

The city is surrounded by highly productive farm land on three sides and a major river on the other. The northern and western parts of the city have seen tremendous growth during the last 10 years. Housing starts and resales are above the national average. The average sale price of a single family home is $75,000 compared to the national average of $99,500.

The city has pockets of poverty, just as most cities of this size. Three of the largest primary schools (including the targeted school), two of the largest middle schools, and a secondary school are located in these pockets of poverty. The city has gone through phases of urban renewal, but the areas with the most poverty have seen little improvement. Three large housing projects are found within the poverty areas. None of the students at the targeted school live in the government housing projects, but most of the mobility by students in this area of the city is between the housing projects and poorer quality single-family dwellings in the areas near the projects.

The construction of a new civic center, police station, several office buildings, and buildings for light industry have vastly improved the character of the downtown area. An expanded river front mall and park is in the planning. The city is fortunate to have many civic, cultural, and recreation facilities. However, except for two small parks, few of these facilities are used by the targeted student population and their families. Members of the community have access to private and parochial elementary schools, a parochial high school, a major university, a division of a major medical school, a business college, and a large junior college.

The community is an intricate part of the targeted school. Two businesses, Burger King and a local travel bureau, have adopted the school through the Adopt-a-School program. The Junior League, Rotary Club, and Women's Medical Alliance provide tutors and guest readers. The Women's Medical Alliance also provides limited monetary support for needed items within the school. Pizza Hut's "Book-It" program rewards the students with pizza for reading literature each month. The Human Service Center and the Children's Home provide part-time counselors for children with emotional problems. The Department of Children and Family Services, Catholic

Social Services, and Lutheran Social Services lend their support to children who are under their supervision. Urban League, Carver Center, Common Place, and Neighborhood House, all local community centers, provide after school tutoring for the targeted school's students who request it or who are referred to them by personnel at the targeted school. These centers also provide after school care and recreational programs. Project Success, a health and wellness project funded by state government, holds health fairs; gives classes on parenting; provides free medical examinations, immunizations, and dental care for low income students. Third and fourth grade students participate in the Project Dare gang and substance abuse prevention programs. Junior Achievement has included the targeted school as part of its new economics' program for kindergarten and second grade students. Personnel from the three hospitals make presentations in the school about health and safety. Since many of the students, even at this age, do a lot of the meal preparation, the local home extension and 4-H organizations have been conducting a project on nutrition and cooking for the fourth grade students. The two major colleges in the central part of the state use the school as a site for the training of student teachers. Many individuals within the city come, on a volunteer basis, to tutor or be mentors for the students. The targeted school is fortunate to receive this help and support from the community.

National Context of the Problem

The problem of poor student reading comprehension and vocabulary development has generated considerable attention at the state and national level. According to Pearson (1985), "There can be no doubt that children's reading comprehension performance concerns educators at all levels today. More than ever before, we are devoting much intellectual and emotional energy to helping students better understand the texts we require them to read in our schools" (p. 724). In the years before 1985, Pearson found that some educators thought that "...there was little one could do to train comprehension...it was a matter properly left to the fates of intelligence and experiences" (p. 724).

Before 1970, the view of the comprehension process focused on the ability of the reader to restate what was presented in the text. Classroom research from the 1970s and '80s found that the amount of time children spent actually reading text materials ranged from 7 to 15 minutes. Most of reading time was spent using workbooks to develop skills rather than actually putting those skills to use in reading literature. Children with the lowest reading ability spent more time working with skills than actually reading; because it was thought that children with reading problems needed more isolated work on phonetic skills to make them better readers (Fielding & Pearson, 1994).

Recent research has found that reading comprehension involves more than restating an author's words and ideas. Today, educators are also moving away from the idea of using fragmented component skills as a separate approach to the teaching of reading (Flood & Lapp, 1990).

The problem of determining what reading comprehension is and whether it can be taught has grown in scope since the 1970s. In 1994, Fielding and Pearson formulated a new definition of reading comprehension:

> Comprehension is now viewed as a much more complex process involving knowledge, experience, thinking, and teaching. It depends heavily on knowledge--both about the world at large and the worlds of language and print. Comprehension inherently involves inferential and evaluative thinking, not just literal reproduction of the author's words. (p. 62)

Students and teachers must begin to play a much more active-constructive role in the comprehension process.

> Teachers can no longer regard the text as the ultimate criterion for defining what good comprehension is; instead s/he must view the text, along with students' prior knowledge, students' strategies, the task, and the classroom situation, as one facet in the complex array we call comprehension. (Pearson, 1985, p. 725)

Flood and Lapp (1990) concur that "...a reader's prior knowledge, experience, attitude, and perspective determine the ways in which information is perceived, understood, valued,

and stored" (p. 491).

Today, researchers and educators agree that the most effective comprehension is the result of the interaction of four sets of variables: reader variables (age, ability, affect, motivation); text variables (genres, type, features, considerateness); educational context variables (environment, task, social grouping, purpose); and teacher variables (knowledge, experience, attitude and pedagogical approach) (Flood & Lapp, 1990, p. 490).

Although there is now a consensus of opinion among researchers concerning the factors that influence reading comprehension, there is still much research being conducted as to what strategies to use when approaching the problem. Educators know that all readers do not process text in the same way. Strategies that might be effective for one type of comprehender may be inappropriate for another. Instructional strategies therefore, should draw from the students' strengths and build on their weaknesses (Wade, 1990).

One of the strategies that students need to improve comprehension is the ability to access prior or background knowledge. To actively construct meaning, "the reader integrates new knowledge derived from the text with his or her background knowledge in a way that makes sense. ...This *interactive* process between text and the reader's background knowledge explains how readers can process text so rapidly" (Wade, 1990, p. 442-3). Many poor and at-risk readers lack sufficient background knowledge on which to build a base for the integration of old and new knowledge. Therefore, little or no interaction takes place between the text and the reader. The reader either rejects or modifies the material in the text to match his/her background knowledge. Thus, a major component of effective reading, self-monitoring for meaning, does not take place (Wade, 1990).

In addition to prior knowledge, students must develop a substantial reading vocabulary in order to comprehend text. Today, "The vocabulary growth occurring in elementary school children is substantial and has received attention from a number of researchers" (Robbins & Ehri, 1994, p. 54). Researchers have found that students with advanced oral language have little

difficulty with primary grade reading materials (p. 55). However, it is harder for children with limited vocabularies to use contextual, structural, and graphophonic cues when encountering unknown words in text.

Current research provides evidence that there are a variety of problems concerning reading comprehension and vocabulary. Strategies for readers to use for comprehension and vocabulary development, relationships between comprehension and vocabulary, methods and strategies for instruction, and the scope of the problem for at-risk readers are all issues being currently investigated by researchers. Additional research is recommended by all researchers in this field.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSES

Problem Evidence

Developing word analysis skills, increasing vocabulary, adding to prior knowledge, and improving comprehension are not isolated parts of the reading curriculum. Proficient readers have the skills needed to combine all the components of reading and are able to relate them to one another. The researchers, designing an intervention in the area of reading, had to determine which components of reading were the students' strengths and which needed improvement. To do this, the researchers collected and analyzed three types of data: results of Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), Success For All placement test results, and the Garfield Reading Interest Inventory.

The problem identified in the targeted group of students was inadequate skills in the areas of word analysis, vocabulary development, and comprehension.

The first form of evidence compiled by the researchers was the percentile at which each student scored in the areas of word analysis, vocabulary, and comprehension on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The researchers then graphed the scores of 48 of the 59 students involved in the study into quartile ranges. The eleven students in special education classes, whose Individual Educational Program (IEP) exempts them from taking the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, were not included in the following data. Data collected from the ITBS are presented in Figures 1,2,3, and 4. Following each figure is a brief analysis of the results.

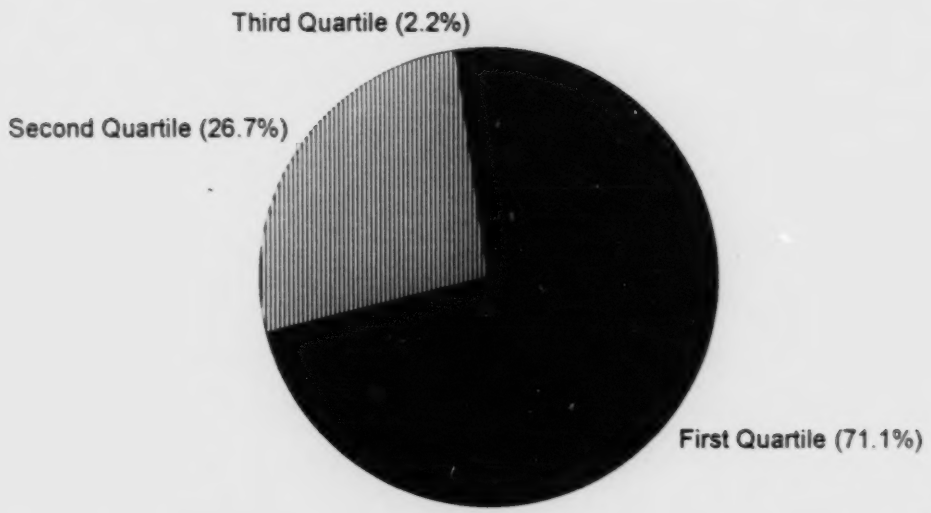


Figure 1. Percentage of targeted students that scored in each quartile on the word analysis section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in the fall of 1995.

As the data presented in Figure 1 illustrate, 98% of the targeted students scored at or below the 50th percentile in the area of word analysis, with a large percentage of the scores in the lowest percentile. The large percentage of students in the bottom quartile clearly indicates that the students have a major deficiency in word analysis skills.

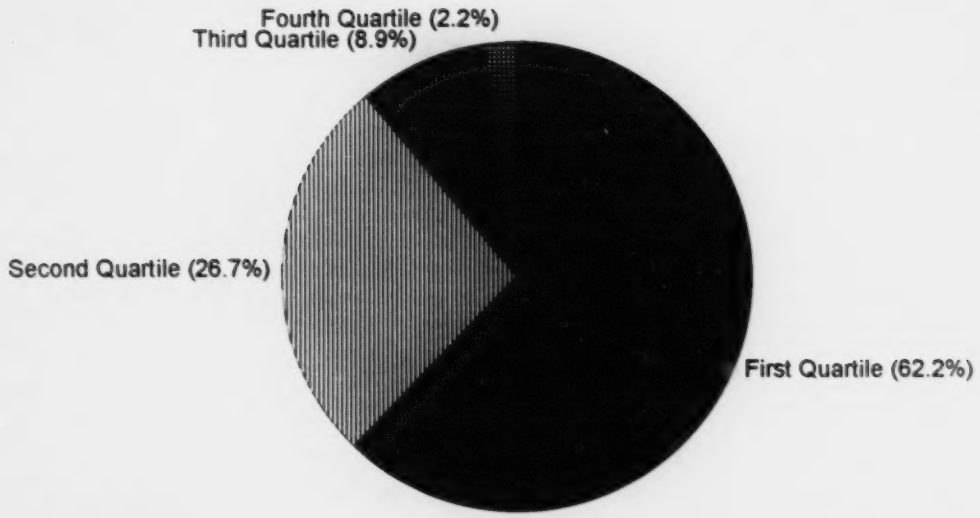


Figure 2. Percentage of targeted students that scored in each quartile in the area of vocabulary on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in the fall of 1995.

Figure 2 illustrates the results of data collected in the area of vocabulary development. These results show that 88 % of the students scored in the bottom half of the range. Within that group, a vast majority of students scored below the 25th percentile. This is a clear indication that the targeted students have vocabularies that are very limited when compared to the national average for students of similar ages.

Research has consistently shown the strong relationship among word analysis, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. As shown by the two previous figures, the targeted group of children scored very low in both word analysis and vocabulary. Therefore, it is not surprising to find similar low achievement scores in the area of reading comprehension. Figure 3 illustrates the data collected to determine the performance of the targeted students in the area of comprehension on the ITBS.

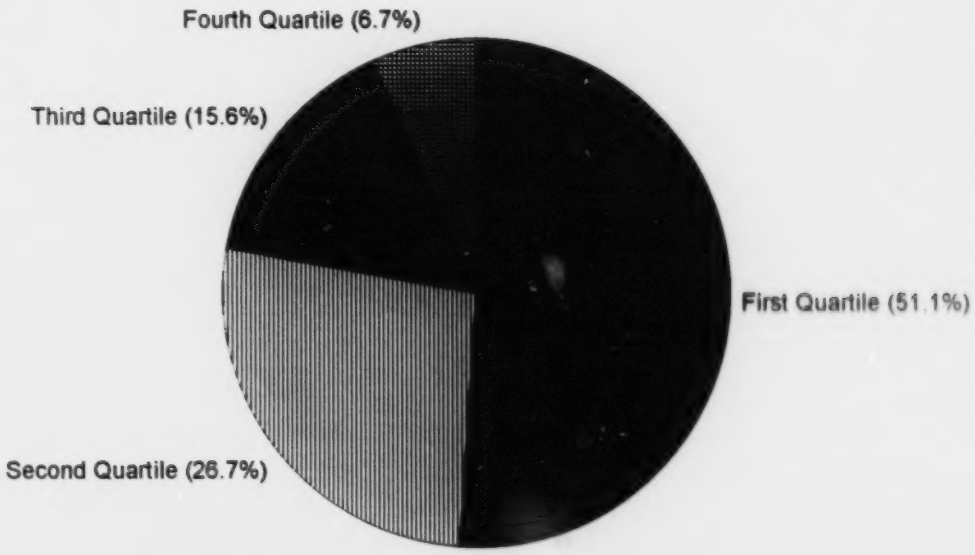
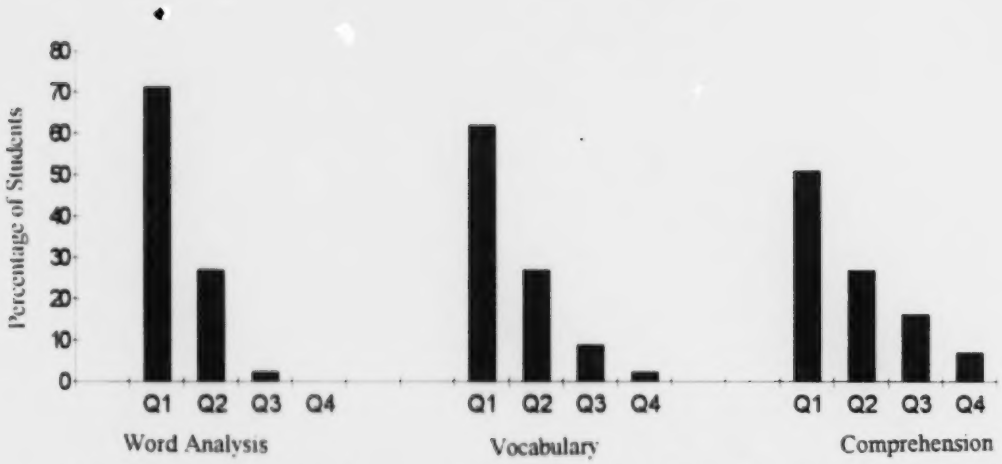


Figure 3. Percentage of targeted students that scored in each quartile in the area of comprehension on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in the fall of 1995.

The data show that in the area of comprehension, more than three-quarters of the targeted students lack a substantial number of the skills needed to understand and interpret written information. More students scored in the upper 50th percentile on this section of the test indicating that even though the word analysis and vocabulary skills are low, the students are making some connections between their prior knowledge and text. A majority of students still scored below the 50th percentile, illustrating a definite need for additional instruction in this phase of reading.



Comparison of Percentage of Students by Quartile in Word Analysis, Vocabulary, and Comprehension

Figure 4. Comparison of the percent of the targeted classes that scored in each quartile in word analysis, vocabulary and comprehension on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in the fall of 1995.

The data from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills clearly illustrate that a vast majority of the targeted students fall in the bottom quartile in the three areas analyzed. An interesting result is that exactly the same number of students scored in the 26th to 50th percentile in word analysis, vocabulary, and comprehension. One of the most dramatic results that Figure 4 illustrates is the extremely low percentage of students that scored at or above the 50th percentile when compared to the national average.

The second form of data collected was the results of placement testing for the Success For All reading intervention program and the San Diego Quick Assessment Test for reading placement of older students. Table 1 shows the number of targeted students that scored at each level on the Success For All placement test (see Appendix A and B for sample of test).

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Table 1

Results of Placement Testing for *Success For All* Reading Groups Fall 1996

Levels of Placement	Number of Students
2.1+ Beginning Second Grade	10
1.5 to 2.0 Transition from First to Second Grade	3
43-48 First Reader-Part 2	2
38-42 First Reader-Part 1	7
32-37 Second Primer	13
26-31 First Primer	15
21-25 Pre-Primer	4

Had the targeted students scored at the appropriate grade level in relationship to the age of the students, 35 of the students would be reading at level 2.1, eleven would be reading at 3.1, seven would be reading at 4.1, and 5 would be reading at 5.1. Twenty-one of the targeted students have been retained at least once and 11 of the students are in cross-category special education classes. However, as the data show, only 10 students are reading and succeeding at the appropriate level. All the students reading at level 32-37 are third and fourth grade students. These data clearly show that a large majority of the targeted students are reading far below grade level. The preceding data suggest a relationship between the level of achievement as measured on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the reading level placement in the Success For All reading program.

The third source of data that was used to substantiate the problem was the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (see Appendix C for survey and results). The results of that survey are shown below.

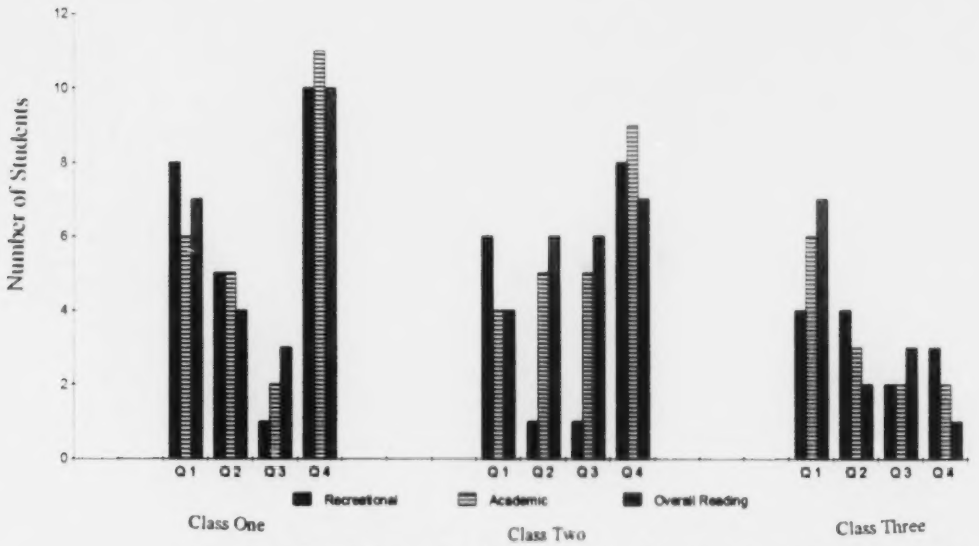


Figure 5. Quartile ranking of interest in the three kinds of reading as determined by McKenna and Kear's scale when applied to the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey in September 1996.

When data were collected and applied to McKenna and Kear's scale, (1990, p.637-638), the researchers were able to draw some conclusions about the students' attitudes toward reading. The researchers have included, at this point, a description of the composition of each class so that the reader will have a clearer picture of the educational background of the targeted classes, thus providing additional insight that could influence the students' interest in reading as shown in this graph.

Class one contains 24 second grade students that are reading near or at grade level. Even though these students are the best readers in the targeted group, there is an almost equal number of students having little or no interest in reading as there are students that have some or a lot of

interest in reading. These results are reflected in both the recreational and academic areas of reading.

Class two is composed of 19 second grade students that are reading near the beginning of first grade level. Three of these students are special education students. Four were retained in first grade. While in first grade the first year, these four were given individual instruction through the Reading Recovery program; however, they were dismissed from the program because they were not making adequate progress. During the second year these students spent in first grade, they received individual tutoring through the Success For All reading program and still are only reading at primer level. Three other students were also dismissed from the Reading Recovery program because they were making inadequate progress, but they were not retained. Six additional students received both the Success For All and Reading Recovery intervention programs and were dismissed because they had made adequate progress. Only three members of this class have not been in some sort of special program to improve their reading skills. Even though these students are not yet reading at grade level, the data from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey suggest most have not lost their interest in reading. This has led the researchers to conclude that because of the one-on-one interventions the students have maintained confidence in themselves as readers and because of the use of a variety of literature within the programs still enjoy and take an interest in reading.

Class three is composed of 13 third and fourth grade students; seven of which are in cross-category special education, two in regular division fourth grade, and four in regular division third grade. All of these students are reading at the first reader level of first grade. Almost 80 % of the students show little or no interest in reading. From the data it is difficult to determine if the students have a general disinterest in reading or whether they have lost interest because they had so many unsuccessful reading experiences during their years in school.

One problem with this kind of survey is that the data can sometimes be unreliable because the students wish to please the teacher. However, when comparing the targeted students'

classroom performance with the results of the survey, most of the children were being fairly honest in their responses.

When data from the three forms of evidence are compared, it is clear that the targeted students would benefit from an intervention that includes methods of improving the skills in the area of word analysis, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Probable Causes

The site and literature suggest several underlying causes that may have resulted in the targeted students' difficulties in reading in the three targeted areas.

Researchers Slavin and Madden (1989) state that "...at risk students lack an adequate level of skills [necessary for success]. Risk factors include low achievement, retention in grade, behavior problems, poor attendance, low socioeconomic status, and attendance at schools with large numbers of poor students" (p. 4).

Slavin and Madden could easily have been describing the targeted students and the school they attend. Of the 59 targeted students, a huge majority fall in the bottom two quartiles on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, about a quarter have been retained, more than half have repeated behavior problems ranging from minor interruptions in class to violent acts against teachers and other students, some have chronic truancy, most are from families that live at or below the poverty level, and all attend a school where the poverty rate exceeds 80%.

In addition to the causes mentioned by Slavin and Madden, the targeted students have other influences in their lives that affect their academic and emotional growth. While some of the targeted students have "normal" home lives, a large number come from home environments that are not conducive to learning. Poor living conditions, drug use, violence, and abuse are a part of their everyday lives. Because of the preceding conditions, substantial numbers of the targeted students receive only limited positive parental influences during the important pre-school years.

A high mobility rate is another factor that influences the success of the targeted students. The constant movement among schools and neighborhoods with similar economic conditions can create a sense on instability within the students. This mobility and instability can interfere with the students' abilities to acquire and maintain an acceptable level of skills because all schools are not always at the same place in the curriculum. Therefore, students who move a lot may miss important skills and concept.

Instability can also be a factor that influences the targeted students' limited development in the social skills necessary for functioning in school. It can affect some student's ability to establish and maintain trusting relationships with both adults and their peers. Students often use inappropriate behavior or withdraw from active participation as ways of surviving the turmoil in their lives.

As mentioned earlier, a factor that has tremendous impact on the students lives is poverty. A vast majority of the targeted students and their families live near or below the poverty level. The need for survival overrides many other things that would provide a foundation on which to build new understanding and knowledge. Books, other forms of print, and a wide variety of experiences, which researchers contend are so important for a young child's development, are far down the list of necessities when poverty is a part of one's life.

All of the above factors have a direct influence on the amount and kind of prior knowledge the targeted students have when entering school. Valencia and Pearson (as cited in Shanklin & Rhodes, 1989) contend that "variations in text comprehension are the result of such factors as reader's background experiences, personal inferences, reading purposes, and application of different reading strategies" (p. 496). The targeted students have a great amount of background knowledge and experiences before they come to school, but most are not the kind that will contribute to their interaction with school curriculum, thus making it difficult to derive meaning from text, to relate new knowledge to their existing knowledge, and to build correlations between

the various phases of reading. Valencia and Pearson's statement provides some insight as to why many of the targeted students have difficulty in reading and comprehension. Therefore, when constructing interventions, instructors must view the student's existing knowledge as a foundation on which to build a more positive framework that will help readers assimilate new information.

The targeted students' limited vocabularies are also a cause that can affect progress in school. Robbins and Ehri (1994) state that "the vocabulary growth before entering elementary school is substantial and significant. ...[and] that vocabulary size is strongly correlated with children's overall school achievement. ...[thus] vocabulary plays an important role in both communication effectiveness and academic success" (p.54). This vocabulary development starts when parents read to children when they are very young . Since many parents of the targeted students have not taken the time to read to their children or some don't have the ability to read to them, the students have not developed the extensive vocabularies that can lead to greater understanding.

Another factor that makes it difficult for the targeted students to interact with text and other students, is the lack of significant discussion or conversation within the home that could expand the students' vocabulary and increase their knowledge. This influence can be observed while watching the way students participate in and react to discussions within the classroom.

Interest in reading is another factor that can influence the students' reading abilities. Many of the targeted students have little interest in reading as illustrated by the Garfield Reading Interest Survey. Tobias (1994) states in the conclusion of the article that:

> There is a substantial linear relationship between interest and prior knowledge. Research suggests that interest contributes to learning in the following ways: invokes deeper types of comprehension process, leads to greater use of imagery, and may stimulate a more emotional, more personal, and more extensive network of relevant associations than is involved in prior knowledge. (p. 50)

Vocabulary and prior knowledge are therefore closely related to the students' ability to comprehend text.

Fielding and Pearson (1994) contend that there is "a strong reciprocal relationship between prior knowledge and reading comprehension ability. The more one already knows, the more one comprehends; and the more one comprehends, the more one learns new knowledge to enable comprehension of an even greater and broader array of topics and texts" (p.62).

All the professional researchers cited in the preceding paragraphs and the on-site researchers agree that there are many possible causes for the students' limited skills in the areas of word analysis, vocabulary, and comprehension.

1. Students have low achievement scores in reading.
2. Many students have been retained.
3. Many students have behavior problems that interfere with learning.
4. Some students miss many concepts that are developed because of poor attendance.
5. A large majority of the students have a low socioeconomic status.
6. All the targeted students attend a school that has a large number of poor students.
7. Large numbers of the targeted students come from home environments that are not conducive to learning.
8. Many students have limited positive support from parents.
9. A high mobility rate results in instability within the students lives.
10. Poverty can have a tremendous negative impact on learning.
11. Limited and unrelated prior knowledge and background experiences interferes with learning.
12. Limited vocabularies effect the ability to comprehend and interact with text.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of Literature

During the last decade, the teaching of reading has shifted from the traditional passive-receptive view, where the teacher taught and the children sat quietly and listened, to a more active-constructive model where children are more involved in the reading process.

Reading is a tool that must be taught and applied to all areas of the curriculum. Active-constructive reading is a complex process that must be developed from the inside out. Students must use their senses and experiences. They must be able to make connections and associations between what they already know and what is being read. They must be active thinkers and participants.

Reading comprehension is an ongoing thinking process that is composed of many different interrelated factors: prior knowledge and background experiences, interpersonal and cultural experiences, cognitive and linguistic experiences and abilities, and an interest in and a purpose for reading (Cheek, Flippo, & Lindsey, 1989; Fielding and Pearson, 1994).

Through the use of a variety of skills, strategies, genres, and experiences, the teacher can create a learning environment that will provide opportunities for students to develop and expand these factors.

Prior knowledge is the most important thing that all readers must have in order to interact with the text and develop comprehension. Prior knowledge is all the knowledge that a reader has acquired since birth. Since young children, especially those at risk, have had few

experiences on which to build, teachers at this level must provide many opportunities for them to add to their existing knowledge.

Researchers have found several effective strategies for activating prior knowledge: brainstorming, topic talking, semantic mapping, prereading questioning, and predicting (Maria, 1989; Johnson, Pittelman, & Heimlich, 1986; Pearson, 1985; Hyerle, 1996). Brainstorming, one of the best ways of activating prior knowledge, allows students to collectively contribute all the prior knowledge that is available within a group. This group knowledge can be extensive whereas an individual's knowledge can be limited (Maria, 1989). Graphic organizers such as semantic maps, concept maps, thinking maps, KWL charts, and idea webs are visual ways of organizing the information gathered during brainstorming and prereading. This allows the students to channel their thinking into the appropriate schema for understanding.

Prior knowledge can also be activated by the prereading activities of discussion, questioning, and predicting. Predicting provides a cognitive guide for students to follow during reading. It requires students to process and analyze information and to make judgments. Questioning is another way of processing information and prior knowledge. The way the questions are formulated and the types of questions can influence comprehension. Most questions should be open-ended and should encourage students to interact with each other about the text. Questions require students to make predictions and draw inferences, recall sequence of events, make associations and draw conclusions. After the students become familiar with the questioning strategy, they should start to take responsibility for asking questions about their own understanding. Discussions before, during, and after reading reflect student experiences, interests, and knowledge. They also provide opportunities for summarizing, clarifying, elaborating and applying the concepts and information gathered from the reading. Discussion provides the teacher with a means of assessing understanding and enables him/her to develop plans for further instruction (Foley, 1993; Shanklin & Rhodes, 1989; Flood and Lapp, 1990).

Following the activating of prior knowledge and the prediction process, the students must be given a purpose for reading. Purposes for reading get the readers started, keep them on course, and carry them through to the end. Purposes can direct the reader's attention toward a concept, aid in the selection of material, aid the reader in selecting information from the text, update the reader's knowledge, confirm/reject predictions, enable readers to learn about structure of text (characters, setting, problems, and solutions), allow readers to apply a strategy and understand how it works, develop higher order thinking skills, determine application into real life situations, and cultivate an appreciation of literature and the joy of reading.

The purpose must be matched with an appropriate instructional strategy and ultimately be transferred from teacher/student directed to student self-directed. Slavin and Madden felt that setting a purpose for reading was so important, that they included this strategy as part of the "Success For All" reading program (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, Wasik, Ross, & Smith 1994; Blanton, Wood, & Moorman, 1990; Kelly & Farnan, 1990).

Vocabulary is developed throughout the reading process. Children can add to their vocabularies by listening and reading. Reading aloud to students is an important strategy for developing vocabulary that can be used with all ages. New vocabulary is best learned through the use of literature selections where it can be incorporated into the listening, reading, and discussion of the selection and is directly tied into the plot, theme, and characters of the story. Younger children are less able to derive meaning from text as they have limited prior knowledge and fewer strategies. Writing stories, poems, riddles, and other genre also helps the child develop vocabulary. Story retells, elaboration, summaries, and predictions are more ways of improving vocabulary (Wilkinson, 1994; Dole, Sloan, & Trathen, 1995; Sweet, 1994).

In addition to the processes and strategies already mentioned, there are other factors that need to be addressed if student comprehension is to be improved. The amount of time that students actually read each day needs to be increased. This time needs to be greater than the amount of time spent on skill development. A wide variety of literature must be available. The

literature should address the students' interests and provide them with a motivation for reading. Students must be given an opportunity for multiple readings of text to increase fluency and comprehension. Comprehension can also be enhanced through the use of mental modeling of thinking skills. The teacher orally models how she/he would go about thinking of solutions to a problem. Time is then given for the students to practice the skill modeled until it becomes part of their thinking process (Duffy, Roehler, & Herrmann, 1988; Fielding and Pearson, 1994).

To develop the interpersonal reading skills needed by students, especially those at risk, a teacher can use activities such as think-pair-share, topic talking, cooperative group discussions, role-playing, dramatizations, sketch-to-sketch (an art/thinking/discussion activity), and reader's theater. These activities, which involve social skill development as well as reading, enhance students' comprehension. Sharing their interpretations and understanding of the text enables students to develop problem solving strategies that are needed for everyday learning (Sweet, 1994; Shanklin & Rhodes, 1989; Fielding and Pearson, 1994). Intrapersonal skills can be developed through the use of visual imagery, silent reading, think alouds, self-questioning, and journal writing (Sweet, 1994; Wade, 1990; Richardson, Ayers, & Zalud, 1993).

No one strategy or method can teach all the different phases of reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Using a variety of activities, materials, genre, styles, strategies and fine arts can help the reader expand his reading skill and understanding. Therefore, in our intervention, we used many of the strategies and solutions that researchers have discovered to improve prior knowledge, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Project Outcomes and Solutions Components

During the period from September 1996 through February 1997, the targeted group of first, second, and third grade students will, through the use of thematic literature units that emphasize the development of vocabulary and comprehension, improve their prior knowledge and develop strategies that result in improved reading comprehension as measured by pre- and post-testing, classroom activities, and ongoing teacher assessment.

In order to accomplish the project outcomes, the following processes were utilized. To begin the intervention, the researchers selected monthly themes around which units of study were developed. Literature books and other genre were selected that supported the themes. All the literature books were read and key concepts and vocabulary were selected. Procedures for teaching the lessons within the unit were adapted, activities devised, and materials were collected. Finally, various forms of assessment, including pretests, posttests, and daily work, were developed.

Action Plan for the Intervention

The following action plan was designed to implement thematic literature units and strategies that address the insufficient level of comprehension and vocabulary of the targeted students. The researchers will carry out the intervention during the time frame allotted for the literature component of the "Success For All" reading program. The intervention will be for 30 minutes, five days a week.

The targeted group will consist of students from mixed groups of first, second, and third graders who have been grouped homogeneously for reading as determined by placement testing through "Success For All."

The researchers developed five themes to be used over the intervention period: Harvest Time, Things that go Bump in the Night (monsters and other scary things), Color My World, Warm and Fuzzy (things that make you feel good), and ABC for You and Me.

A wide variety of materials were gathered. Trade books, poems, songs, and other types of literature will be used to implement the units. The literature selections will be read and sorted into two groups: books to be read by the teacher to implement the theme and supplemental books for student reading. Key concepts and vocabulary will be developed for the general theme and for each literature selection.

Next, the researchers determined procedures for instruction and gathered learning activities to support each unit. At the beginning of each unit, a form of assessment will be used to

determine the existing knowledge that students have about the subject. Included in the appendix are examples of the forms the researchers will use. Following the assessment, students will engage in group activities, such as brainstorming, to determine what the group knows as a whole. Children will then be introduced to the general vocabulary needed for comprehension of the concepts in the unit (see appendix for these lists).

The next step in our action plan was the development of a five day lesson plan. The following is an outline of the plan that will be used. The plan will vary slightly from week to week depending on the unit and outside influences during reading time.

Unit Introduction

1. Introduce unit and vocabulary that covers entire unit
2. Do a variety of individual activities to determine prior knowledge
3. Do KWL or similar charts to determine group prior knowledge

Weekly Plan

A. Day 1
    1. Give vocabulary pretest
    2. Introduce book, discuss author-illustrator
    3. Introduce vocabulary--using sentences from text to illustrate
    4. Make predictions
        a. Show pictures of beginning, middle and end of story
        b. Have children write at least one sentence for each part of the story, predicting what they think will happen
    5. Introduce poem that will be used along with literature book
B. Day 2
    1. Set purpose for reading
    2. Review predictions and vocabulary

3. Teacher reads the story aloud for first time
    a. Interactive story reading
    b. Checking ongoing predictions
    c. Story discussion
4. Reread poem and discuss meaning and vocabulary

C. Day 3

1. State purpose for reading
2. Teacher reads story again
3. Do activities focusing on one of the following higher order thinking skills
    a. Sequencing
    b. ABC order
    c. Comparing and contrasting
    d. Making inferences
    e. Drawing conclusions
    f. Self-questioning strategies
    g. Locating details
    h. Summarizing
4. Critique story--orally
5. Do choral reading of poem

D. Day 4

1. Use assorted activities for story retell
    a. Dramatization
    b. Illustrations
    c. Group discussion
2. Do additional activities to support skill and concept development
    a. Story elaboration

b. Character analysis

c. Poetry activity

3. Pre-writing activities

a. Semantic mapping

b. Brainstorming

c. Story starters

E. Day 5

1. Give vocabulary posttest

2. Give comprehension test

3. Do assorted writing activities

a. ABC books

b. Story starters

c. Journal writing

d. Story elaboration

e. Poetry books

Before beginning the intervention, the targeted children will be given the Garfield Reading Attitude Survey, developed by McKenna and Kear, to determine their interest in reading. This will also be given at the end of the intervention to determine if their interest in reading has changed (see appendix A for survey and results).

The following are ongoing assessment forms that will be used by whole groups, cooperative smaller groups, and individuals to measure understanding and growth.

a. Reading attitude survey

b. Pre and post vocabulary tests

c. Comprehension tests following each story

d. Circle web--pre-unit activity to determine how much is known about concepts

e. Venn diagrams for comparing and contrasting

f. T-charts for comparisons

g. Flow charts for sequencing story parts

h. Story maps

i. KWL charts--at beginning and as an assessment tool at end

j. Semantic maps

k. Brainstorming webs

l. Journal activities

m. Student ABC/Vocabulary books

n. Poetry books

The intervention is designed to improve the student's higher order thinking skills, develop new vocabulary, improve oral language, and increase reading comprehension. Each week's intervention will have the same basic format as described in the outline. A different piece of children's literature and a poem will be used each week. Before reading the literature selection, students will have whole group or cooperative learning team discussion pertaining to each week's topic to determine their prior knowledge. The results of this brainstorming, will be produced on charts, webs, or other appropriate graphic organizers.

This will be followed by the introduction to and the first oral reading of the literature. The students will be asked questions that require them to predict outcomes, recall information, sequence story events, analyze characters and settings, and determine the story's problem and solutions. Additional readings of the story provide the student further opportunities for developing other skills such as character analysis, drawing inferences and conclusions, and story summarization.

Each week's intervention also provides for the improvement of oral and written grammar and basic writing skills, as well as opportunities for creative writing. Students will be involved in activities which require them to write their own poetry; keep a journal; retell stories both orally and in written form; create different endings for stories; make up their own adventures similar to

the characters in the book; make mini-books that develop sequencing skills, and construct a mini-dictionary for each unit which will increase vocabulary, develop alphabetical order skills, and improve sentence construction skills. Students will experience many other kinds of activities which will develop the desired outcomes of increased background knowledge, improved vocabularies, and greater reading comprehension.

Methods of Assessment

The data collection methods to be used in order to assess the effects of the intervention include a reading interest inventory, weekly vocabulary pre- and post-tests, a weekly comprehension test, teacher observations, a variety of graphic organizers, and student journals for the final story.

Students will be given the *Success for All* placement test to determine the original placement of students within the group. Every eight weeks an additional test will be given to determine changes of levels within the program. Students will also be given the Elementary Reading Interest Inventory at the beginning and end of the intervention to determine if their interest in reading changes as the result of the intervention. Weekly pre- and post-vocabulary tests will be compared to determine if the intervention increased the students vocabulary. A weekly comprehension test will be given to assess the students' understanding of the materials that were presented. A teacher/researcher log will be kept throughout the intervention to document successes, failures, and changes that were made to the intervention.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase vocabulary, improve reading comprehension, and to expand students' prior knowledge. Literature based themes were selected, books were chosen, and a variety of activities were developed to achieve the desired outcomes.

The researchers selected five themes to be used during the implementation: Harvest Time, Things that Go Bump in the Night, Color My World, Warm and Fuzzy, and ABC for You and Me. The intervention took place daily during the 30-minute literature component of the *Success For All* reading program.

Trade books, poems, songs, and other types of activities that addressed the themes were selected. Key concepts were developed and vocabulary words were chosen for each theme and each literature selection. Finally, weekly plans were developed that included:

- pre-testing to determine the amount of existing vocabulary as related to the story--test was read to students so that limited reading ability would not be a factor in determining if student knew vocabulary
- brainstorming to assess prior knowledge of subject
- interactive story reading to develop concepts and vocabulary
- recall and response activities to improve reading comprehension
- activities to generate interest and increase student involvement in order to achieve outcomes
- post-testing of vocabulary to determine growth--test was again read to students

- comprehension tests to assess understanding of the literature selection--test was read to students as the purpose was to test comprehension not reading ability

The same basic lesson plan format was used throughout the implementation (see Appendix D).

The intervention started the third week of school following *Success For All* testing and student placement. Students included in the targeted groups were from second through fourth grades. These reading groups were maintained for the next five weeks. The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was given during the first week of the intervention and again at the end of the intervention to determine if interest levels had changed.

The first unit theme was "Harvest Time." Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree, Apple Pickin' Time, Johnny Appleseed, and The Biggest Pumpkin Ever were the literature selections for this unit. The unit was introduced through stories and hands on activities. Pictures of things pertaining to harvesting were shown. Additional books were displayed and students were given time to read them. Children sampled different kinds of fruit. Students made charts that illustrated what parts of plants were eaten and whether they were considered fruits or vegetables.

During the four weeks following the introduction, the researchers followed the 5-day plan that had been developed for each book. In addition to the previously mentioned general components of the weekly plan, many other activities were developed.

- Sequencing activities were done in conjunction with all four stories.
- Venn diagrams were done to compare and contrast characters, events, and variations of the story by different authors (see Appendix E).
- Cooperative learning activities were included to develop some of the unit concepts.
- Activities were incorporated that required the use of the five senses to describe the characteristics of apples.
- Writing activities were used to enhance the content covered in the literature selections.
- Each child was given a mini-dictionary in which to write the vocabulary words in meaningful sentences (see sample pages in Appendix F).

- Poems were chosen to accompany the unit, learned and practiced by students, and, as a culminating activity, performed at a choral reading program for the parents.

During the implementation of the first literature theme, the researchers realized the activities that were planned and developed required more time than was originally allotted. Therefore, the researchers determined that the number of themes would need to be reduced in order to fully develop the vocabulary, concepts, and activities that were designed to bring about the desired outcomes.

The second unit, "Things That Go Bump in the Night," included the literature selections of The Monster Bed, After School Monster, and Where the Wild Things Are. The weekly lesson plans followed a similar format as those in the first unit. Many of the activities that accompanied this unit were similar to those carried out in the Harvest Time Unit. Upon completion of the three stories, a week was spent in culminating activities.

- Wrap-a-round discussions were held to review the elements of each story.
- A three-way Venn diagram, that compared and contrasted the monsters in each story, was constructed.
- A semantic map that categorized monster characteristics was made by each group (see Appendix G).
- A class story about monsters was written by each class. This then served as a model for the writing of individual or paired student stories about monsters (see Appendix H).
- A "rumpus" party with music, story reading, and refreshments was the final activity.

Upon completion of this unit, the researchers again assessed the direction in which to proceed. Changes in student reading abilities and levels, as determined by *Success for All* testing, had resulted in the restructuring of the groups. Some of the original students remained and others were reassigned to different groups. The researchers decided that the students in the restructured

groups were ready for longer, more involved stories than those planned for the next unit. Because of this and a project that was completed during a masters' course, "Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum," the researchers decided the final part of the action research project would be devoted to the extensive study of a single novel. This approach is used in the "Reading Wings" component of the *Success For All* reading program by children reading at or above the second grade level.

Two novels, The Josefina Story Quilt and The Goat in the Rug, both easy to read chapter books, and literature selections from the fourth theme, "Warm and Fuzzy," were chosen to be used for this study. The second novel would be used only if time permitted.

The Josefina Story Quilt, by Eleanor Coerr, is a story about a young girl, Faith, her pet hen, Josefina; and Faith's family during their trip across the country from Missouri to California as part of a wagon train in the 1880's. Josefina and Faith have several adventures, and Faith makes quilt blocks to tell their story.

The basic lesson plan format remained the same, except that now, it was applied to each chapter instead of an entire book.

Because of the students' limited knowledge about the setting, events, and historical time of the story, extensive background development was done as the story developed. Maps of the Oregon/California Trail were displayed and discussed. Views of the land along the trail and the kinds of items used in their daily lives were introduced through the use of pictures and charts. Additional books about quilting, wagon trains, and pioneer times were read to the students or were available for their individual reading to help broaden their knowledge of life in the 1880's.

Since the students had become better readers and most were becoming more capable writers, the study was expanded to include writing activities that involved more higher order thinking skills. Student responses in the learning logs enabled the researchers to check the students' understanding of the concepts of the story and their ability to express this

understanding in written form. Student journal activities helped the students make connections and comparisons between the story events and events from their own lives.

Because quilts were a very important part of this story, quilts also became an important part of the unit. A guest speaker, a quilting expert, introduced the students to the art of quilting. She displayed both modern and antique quilts and explained how they were similar and different. Since a quilt square was an important visual cue of the events in each chapter, the researchers reproduced the squares and had the students color and assemble them into their own paper quilt. Samples of the unit plan, logs, journals, and quilt squares that gave visual cues for the chapters events are included in Appendices I through L.

The next novel unit, The Goat in the Rug by C. Blood and M. Link, was not used because following the *Success For All* testing in late January, the students in the targeted reading groups changed drastically. One of the researchers had an entirely different group of students, one had less than half the students previously involved, and one had no students at all. Therefore, the intervention was concluded at that time.

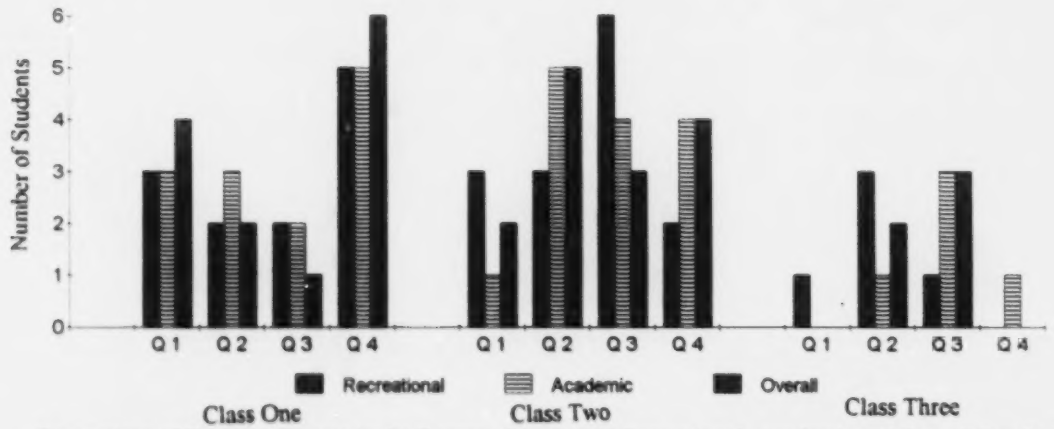
Presentation and Analysis of Results

The object of the intervention was to improve students reading comprehension and vocabulary and to build on and broaden their existing knowledge. To assess the changes that took place during the intervention, the researchers used a variety of activities and tools that measured the students' interest in reading, reading level growth, vocabulary growth, and comprehension of the stories. A variety of daily activities that had a major impact on the results were also done, although their effects were not quantifiable.

To determine if the students' interest in reading had changed, the researchers again gave the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. Of the 54 students that took the survey at the beginning of the intervention, only 33 remained with the researchers throughout the intervention. Eight students moved from the school and 14, as a result of *Success For All* reading testing, changed

reading levels and were moved out of the targeted groups. Class one had 15 of the original 24 students, class two had 14 of 19, and class three had 5 out of 13.

Table 2 illustrates the results of the interest survey at the conclusion of the intervention and includes only those students that remained with the researchers throughout the intervention.



Comparison of Targeted Classes in the Degree of Interest in Recreational, Academic and Overall Reading

Figure 6. Quartile ranking of interest in the three kinds of reading as determined by McKenna and Kear's scale when applied to the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey at the completion of the intervention in January 1997.

A comparison of the above data with that collected at the beginning of the intervention, shows that there was no significant change by the students in regard to their interest in reading. The percentage of students in all three classes remained approximately the same in that about half still showed little or no interest in reading and about half had some or a lot of interest in reading.

Even though the students' interest in reading did not significantly change, their reading ability showed significant improvement. Table 2 illustrates the changes in *Success For All* reading level placement of the students that remained with the researchers throughout the implementation.

Table 2

Results of Post-Intervention Success For All Placement Testing and Comparison of Results to Pre-intervention Testing for All Targeted Students

Level of Placement	Number of Students September 1996 Pre-Intervention	February 1997 Post-Intervention
3.1+ First Semester of Third Grade		3
2.2+ Second Semester of Second Grade		12
2.1+ First Semester of Second Grade	10	15
1.5 to 2.0 Transition from 1st to 2nd Grade	4	0
43-48 First Reader: Part 2	3	2
38-42 First Reader: Part 1	7	2
32-37 Second Primer	13	0
26-31 First Primer	15	0
21-25 Pre-Primer	4	0

This chart clearly shows the improvement made by the students in reading. At the beginning of the implementation, only 19 % of the students were reading at grade level. However, at the conclusion of the intervention, 45 % were reading at or above grade level. Of more importance however, was the fact that 59 percent of the targeted students were reading at or below the primer level at the start of the implementation. Average students are reading at this level during the first semester in first grade. Since all the targeted students were in second grade or above,

19 of the second grader students were approximately 1 year behind and the 13 third and fourth grader students were up to 5 years behind in reading. Of the 28 second grade students that remained throughout the intervention, 10 % are now reading above grade level, 43 % are reading at the appropriate level, and 43 % have progressed to the point where they are only about two months behind in grade level. Of the five, third and fourth grade students that remained throughout the implementation, three have progressed to level 2.1+ and two have progressed two levels to the second part of the first reader. Seven of the remaining targeted students are in full time special education classes and have considerable problems in reading but still made progress. The researchers feel that this improvement is the result of the combination of the researchers' intervention and the *Success For All* reading program strategies.

The third kind of data collected were the results of comprehension tests given for each literature selection. The district in which the targeted students attend places great emphasis on the results of the Illinois Goals Assessment Performance (IGAP) test in third grade. The IGAP test uses questions that consist of a combination of multiple choice with one correct answer, multiple choice with multiple correct answers, sequencing, higher order thinking skills, problem solving, and writing. Since all of the students will eventually take this test and the district highly recommends this type of testing, the researchers developed comprehension questions for the literature selections using a similar format. This would allow the targeted students an opportunity to become familiar with the format and as a result possibly have more success when taking the IGAP test.

Since the students had very little practice in writing answers to questions that required interpretation and response, the researchers included only one higher order thinking/response question per test in the first unit. The researchers found that as the intervention proceeded, the questions that required a thought-out, written response were the ones the students most often missed. Many students could verbalize the answers, but had considerable difficulty in transferring their thoughts to the paper.

The number of students that completed each test was not consistent due to absences and to changes in the student makeup of the reading group. However, since one weeks' results were not dependent on the materials learned the previous week, all students that had participated during that week's literature selection were included in the results, not just the original intervention students.

Figures 7 through 15 illustrate the results of the comprehension tests. The researchers have also included additional comments about the tests and unit activities that could have influenced the outcome of the testing.

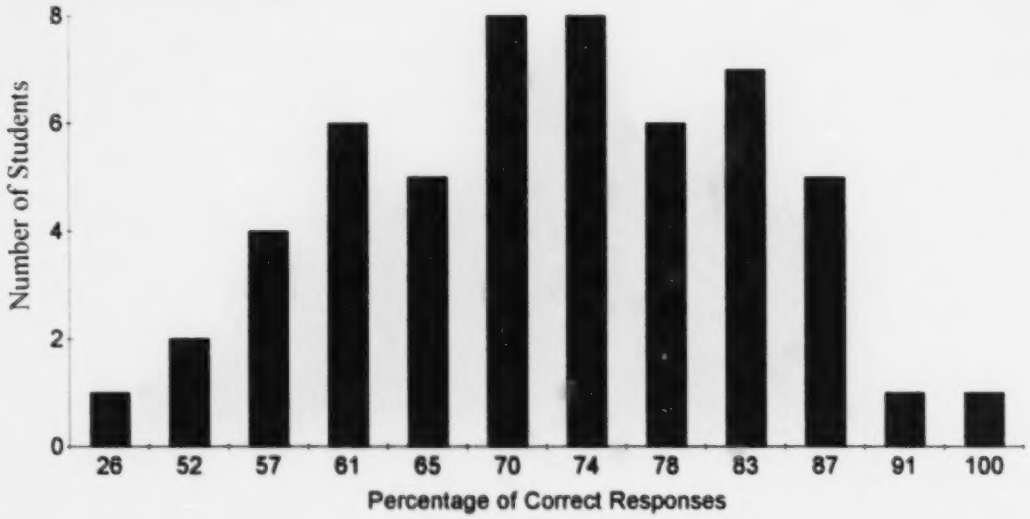


Figure 7. Results shown reflect the number of targeted students that scored at the given percent on the comprehension test on Gail Gibbons' book, The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree.

The test for this literature selection consisted of one higher order thinking question and four multiple choice questions that had multiple correct answers. Most of the students had never had this kind of a test before. Therefore, the researchers used a variety of strategies to prepare students for these kinds of questions. Sixty-six percent of the students passed the test with a group average of 72 %, but many still struggled with the format of the test.

The researchers were surprised to find that even though the targeted students live in a temperate zone which has distinct seasons and that many had visited apple orchards, the students had problems relating the events of the story to the proper season. As the intervention continued, it became evident that, because of the students' limited prior knowledge about the changes fruit trees go through in a year's time, additional visuals, graphic organizers, and information would be needed to help the students understand the concepts. It is possible that the problems the students had distinguishing events in different seasons could have had as much influence on the results as the format of the test.

Therefore, as part of the next story, additional background was given before beginning the story.

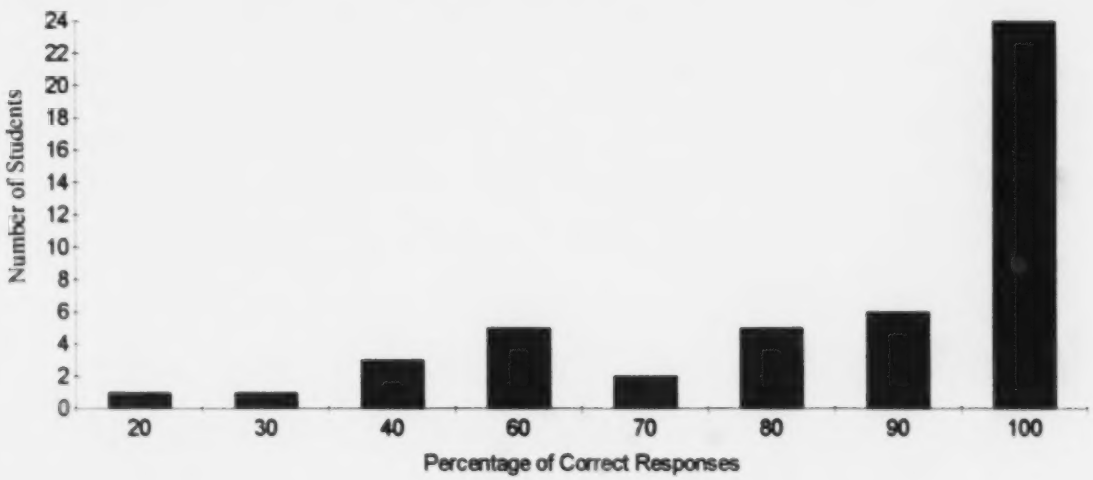


Figure 8. The percent range and the number of students that scored at each percent on the comprehension test given for the literature selection, Apple Pickin' Time by Michele Bonoit Slawson.

This test consisted of one higher order thinking question and four multiple choice questions in which the answers were given in multiples and the students had to select the correct combination. As Figure 8 illustrates, most of the students did extremely well on this test. The average student score was 86 %, with slightly more that half of the students obtaining perfect scores.

The researchers concluded that perhaps the higher scores could be attributed to four factors.

- The students did not have to distinguish seasons and seasonal changes.
- The students had more prior knowledge about picking apples because many had previously visited apple orchards during harvest time.
- Because of previous implementation activities, the students were acquiring more knowledge about the production of apples.
- This test had a slightly different format in that only one answer was correct.

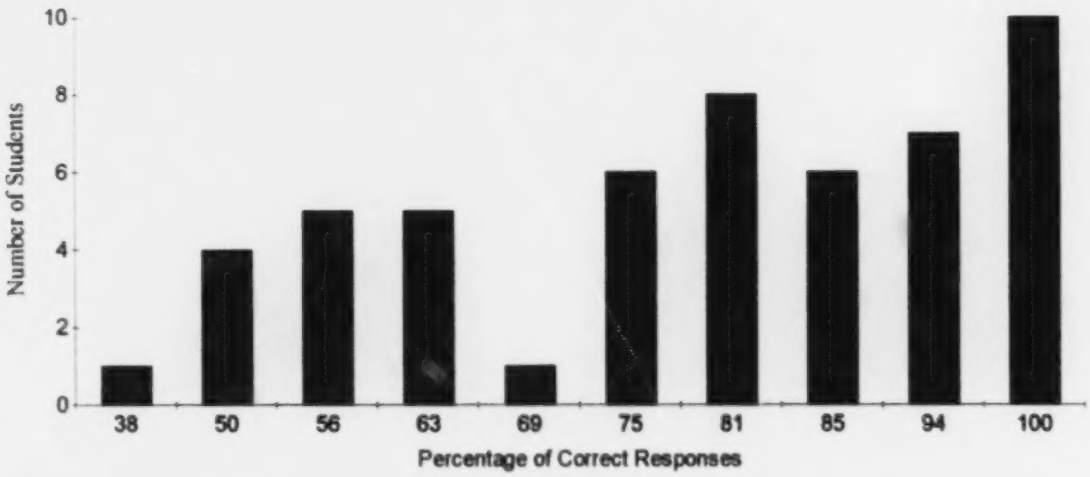


Figure 9. Comparison of the percent range and number of students that scored in each percent on the comprehension test for Steven Kellogg's book, Johnny Appleseed.

This test consisted of a combination of a response question plus four multiple choice questions with both one correct answer and multiple correct answers and was similar to the format used for the Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree. Because the students had difficulty on the previous test with this format, the researchers modeled this process, selecting more than one correct answer, throughout the discussions and activities related to this literature selection. The average student score on this test was 79 % with a majority of the students scoring in the upper

25 percent of the test. This led the researchers to believe that the additional modeling did help the students when taking the test.

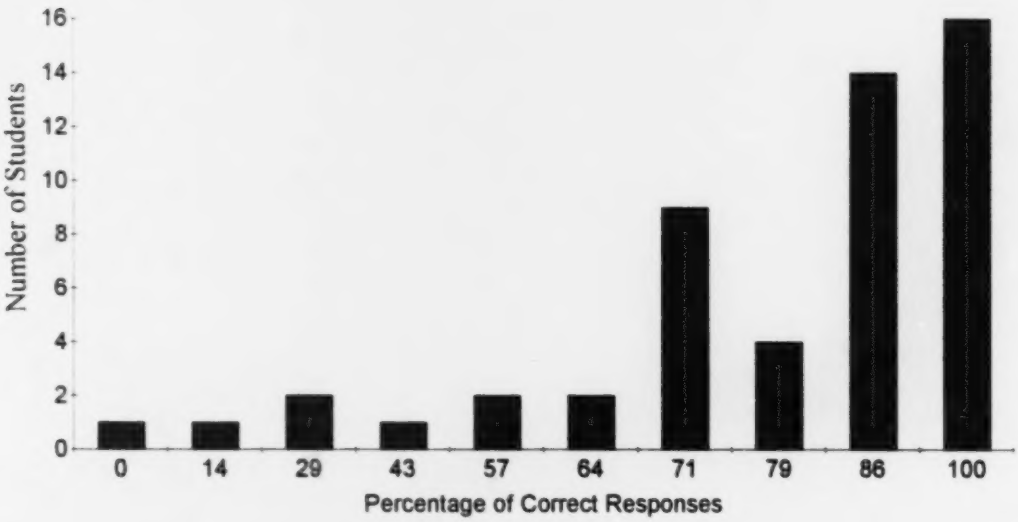


Figure 10. The percent range and number of students scoring at each percent on the comprehension test for the literature selection, The Biggest Pumpkin Ever, by Steven Kroll.

This test was slightly different from the first three tests in that the multiple choice questions required the students to compare the two characters in the story with the action that took place. The essay question required the students to make a comparison of the wishes of the two main characters. This was slightly harder than the previous tests, but the majority of the students were able to give correct responses. The averages student score on this test was 79 % with 16 students getting perfect scores.

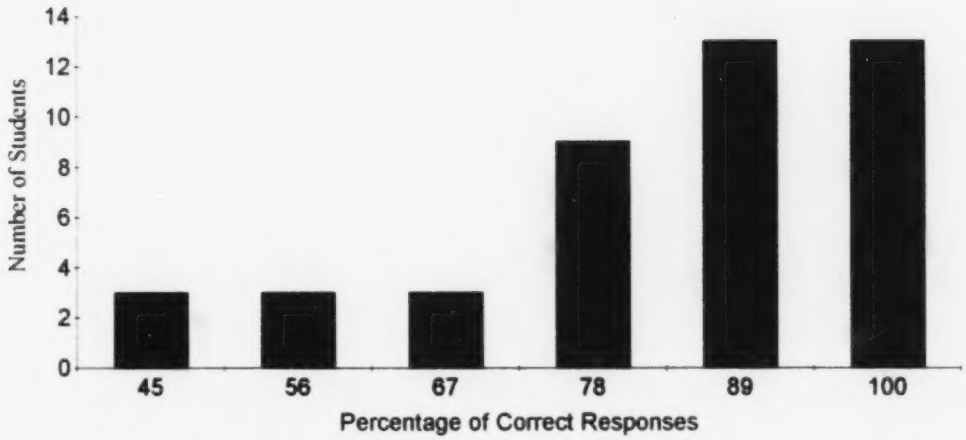


Figure 11. Percent range and number of students that scored in that range on the comprehension test for The After School Monster by M. Moss.

The monster, in this story, represents the fear the little girl had of coming home to an empty house. At first, many of the student had trouble understanding what the monster really represented. Often, many of the targeted students come home to a similar situation. Therefore, when the "monster" was explained, they quickly grasp the idea and were able to relate to the fears that the little girl had in the story. The children also enjoyed this simply because most kids like stories in which big, ugly monsters are defeated by "good".

Since the format of this test was similar to the previous ones, the previously mentioned factors may have contributed to the better understanding of the story enabling 85 % of the students to answer the questions successfully with an average student score of 83 %.

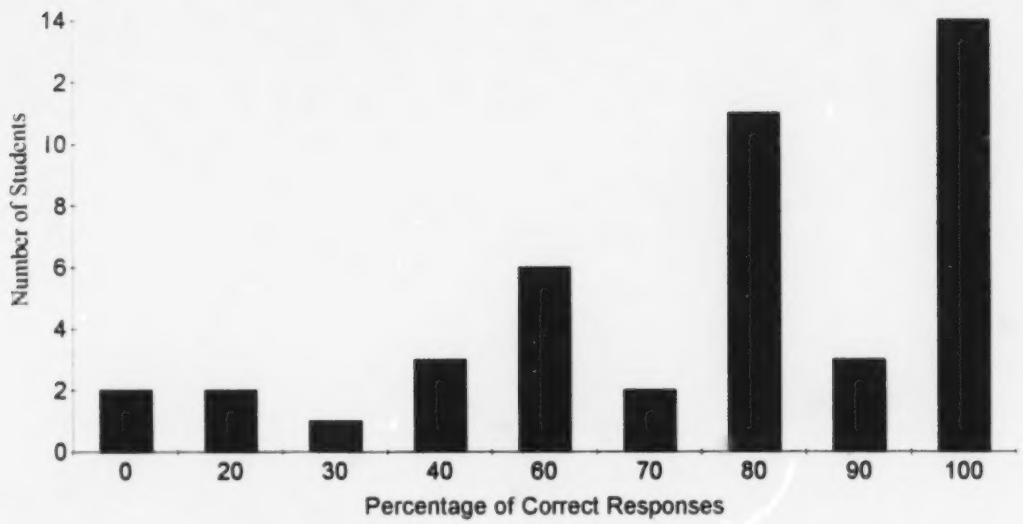


Figure12. Comparison of number of students that scored at each percent on the literature selection, The Monster Bed by Jeannie Willis.

This story was written from the monster's point of view: the little monster in the story was afraid of humans just as young humans are afraid of monsters. The monster's mother gave him the same reasons for not being afraid as human mothers do by explaining there are no such things as humans, or in the case of humans, no such thing as monsters. This test was composed of four multiple choice questions with one correct answer and a response question that required the students to draw a conclusion about the ending of the story. The average student score was 75 % with 28 of the students scoring 80 % or higher.

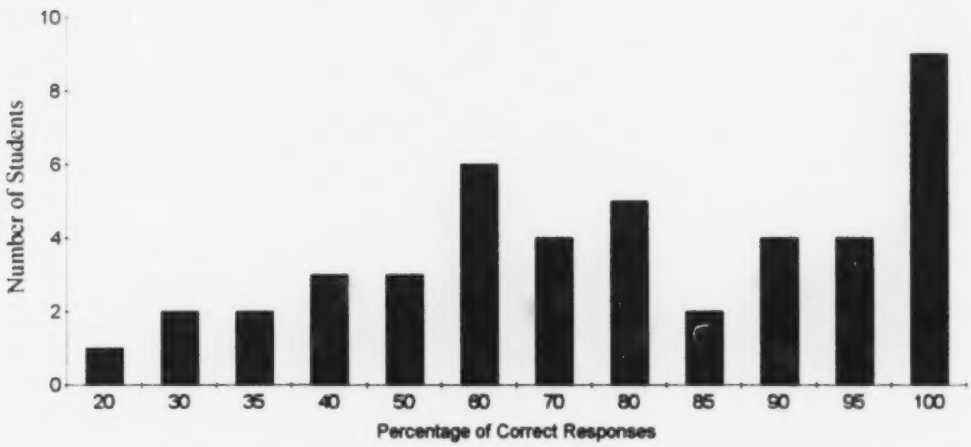


Figure 13. Comparison of the number of students and the percent correct on the comprehension test for, Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak.

The researchers chose this literature selection even though they knew that many of the students had heard the story before. The researchers felt this would be an enjoyable way to conclude the monster unit. High scores were expected on this test, but the researchers were surprised when the average student score was only 73 % and, unlike most of the other tests, the scores were spread almost evenly over a very wide range. There were two factors that may have influenced the scores; one question required the students to put five events from the story in sequential order and two questions required written responses.

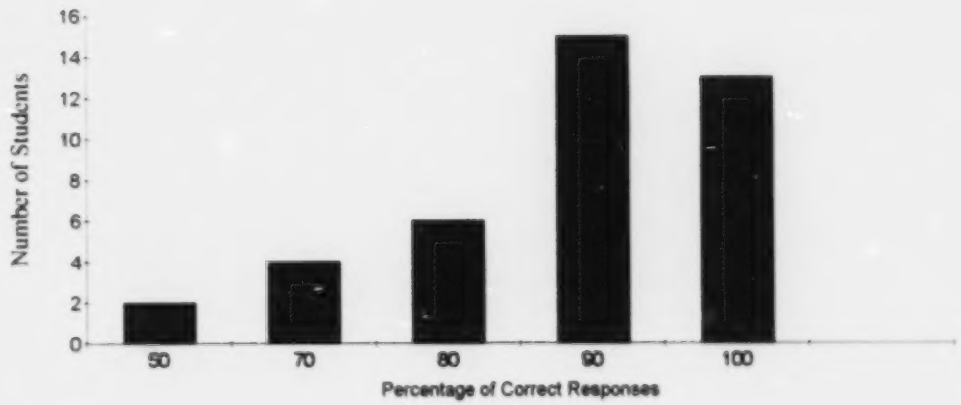


Figure 13. Comparison of the number of students that scored at each percent on the literature selection, The Josefina Story Quilt.

The researchers spent a longer span of time on this story than the previous literature selection. Because this was a chapter book, the researchers implemented more extensive activities to fully develop the concepts of each chapter. The average student score on this test was 86 % with 70% of the students scoring 90 % or better. The researchers believe that perhaps the additional time spent on developing the concepts of this literature selection led to a better understanding of the story, resulting in higher scores.

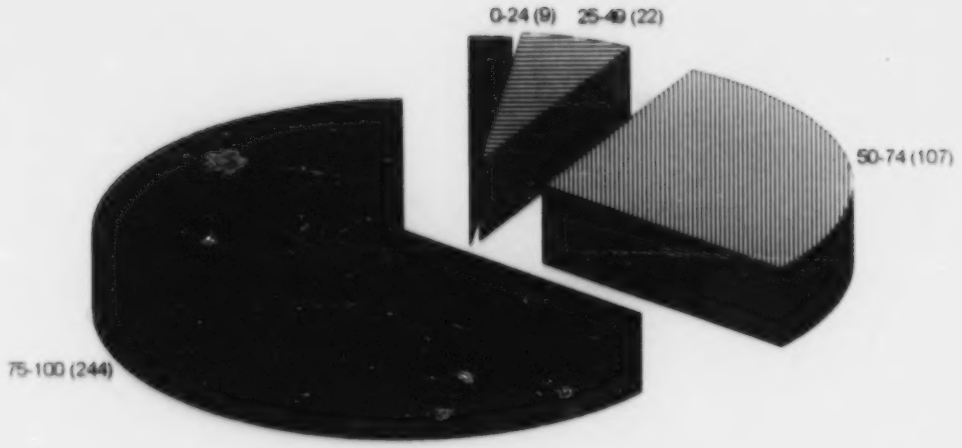


Figure 14. Total number of scores in each quartile for all comprehension tests.

When the results of all the comprehension tests were compiled, ordered from lowest to highest, and then divided into quarters, the data show that a vast majority of the students scored in the upper quartile on all the tests. Low scores by a few students had a tendency to lower the mean, but the above figure shows that a majority of the students were able to comprehend information from the literature selections without too much difficulty.

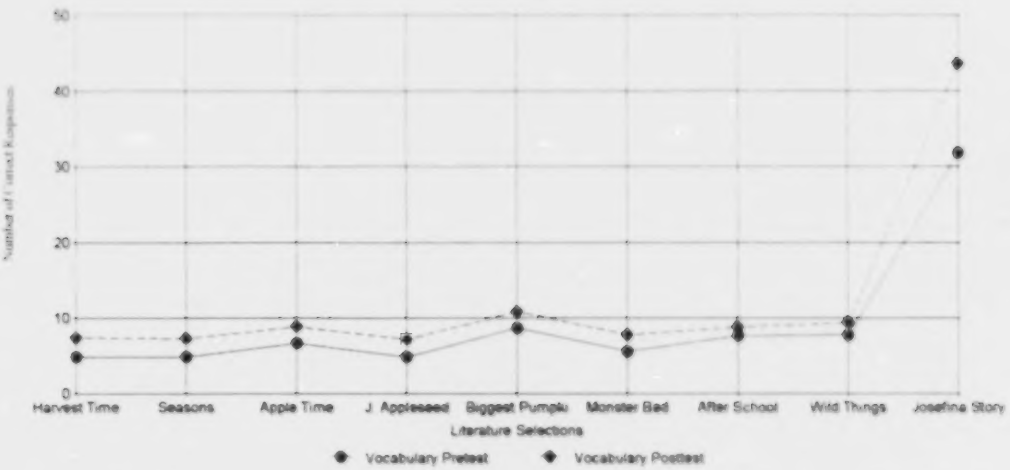


Figure 15. Class one average vocabulary scores that illustrate the amount of growth between the pretest and posttest for each literature selection.

The first eight tests required the students to know from 10 to 14 words. Class one gained an average of between two and three words for the first eight tests. On the Josefina Story Quilt, which had a total of 52 vocabulary words, the students gained an average of 12.2 words from the pretest to the posttest.

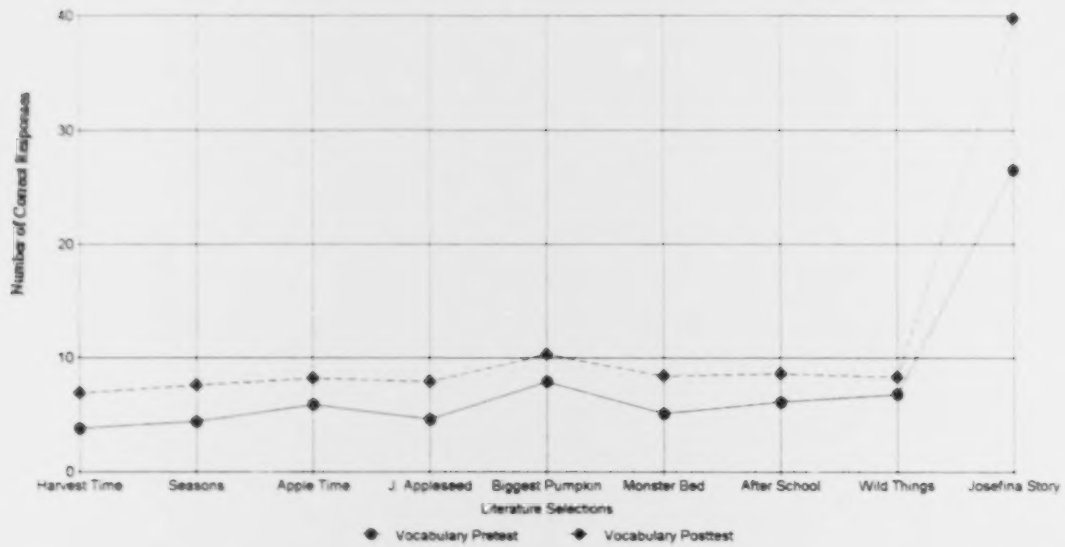


Figure 16. Class two average vocabulary scores that illustrate the amount of growth from the pretest to posttest for each literature selection.

Class two had similar gains to that of class one. The average gain was almost three for all the tests except The Josefina Story Quilt. On the last test, class two had an average gain of 14.3 words from the pretest to the posttest.

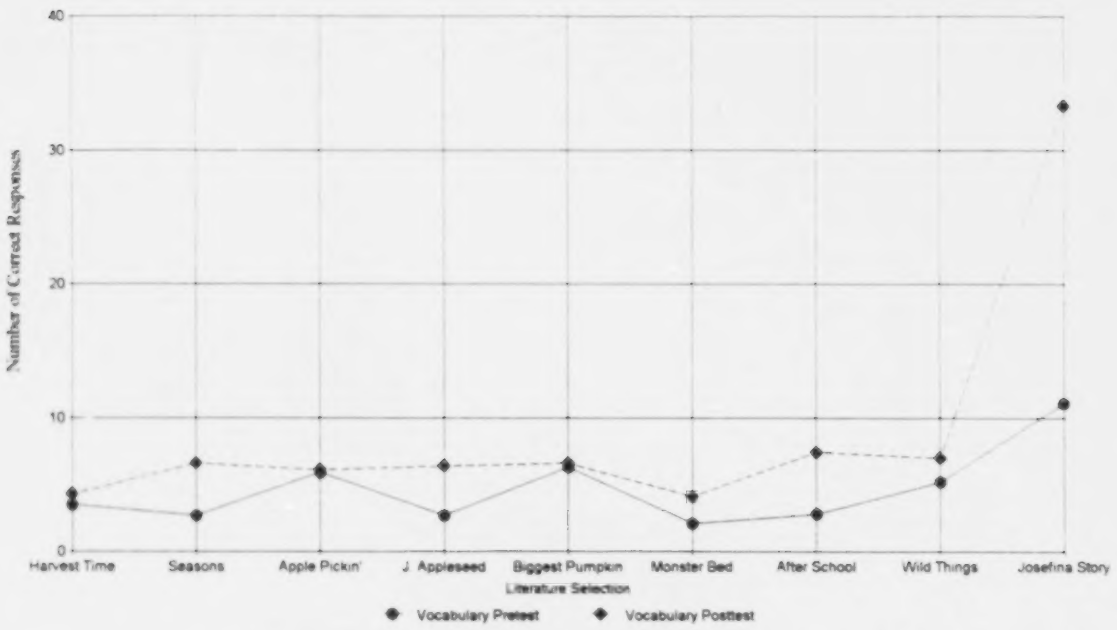


Figure 17. Class three average vocabulary scores that illustrate the growth from the pretest to posttest for each literature selection.

Class three made growth on each story, but it did not follow the same pattern as class one and two. The amount of growth varied with each story: ranging from a growth of .3 words to 5.4 words. On The Josefina Story Quilt, the average gain was 22.2 words from the pretest to the posttest.

When analyzing just the results of The Josefina Story Quilt test, the researchers noted that even though class three showed the largest gain, 22.2 words, their average score on the posttest was approximately the same as the pretest results for classes one and two. Therefore, gains of an average of 12.2 for class one and 14.3 for class two, were significant because of the students' prior knowledge of many of the words.

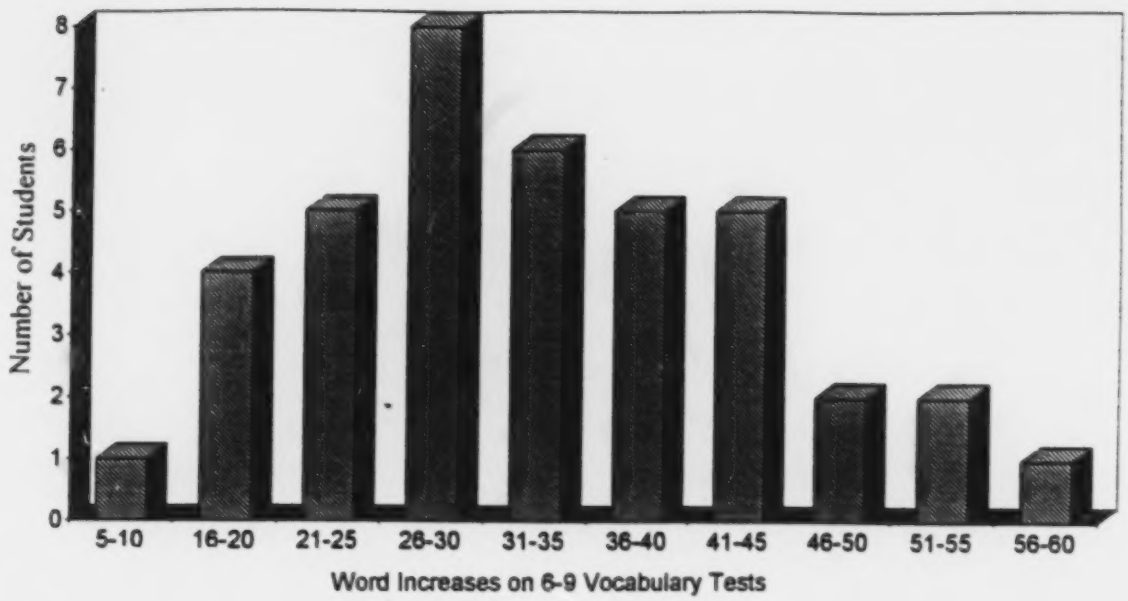


Figure 18. Number of students and the total words they increased from pretest to posttest on six to nine vocabulary tests.

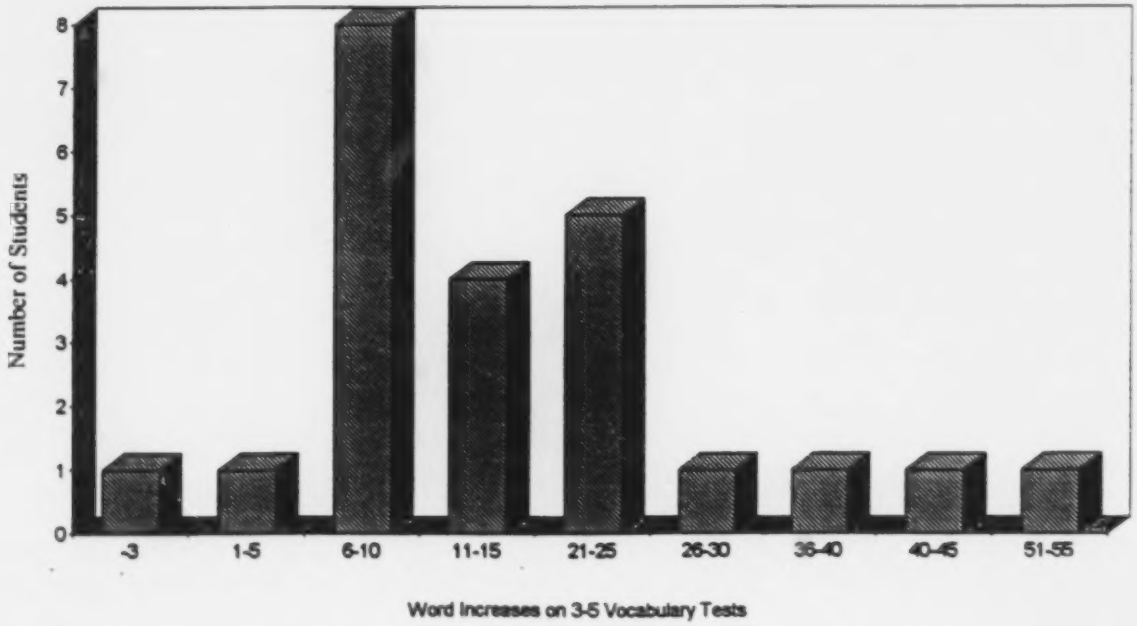


Figure 19. The number of students and the total words they increased from pretest to posttest on three to five vocabulary tests.

Figures 18 and 19 illustrate the fact that the students learned a very large number of new words during this implementation. Some of those taking less than the entire nine tests were included at the beginning of the implementation but left before the end. Others were not present at the beginning, but joined the reading groups about halfway through the intervention. Those included at the end, had many more words on which to base their improvement scores because of the number of targeted words in The Josefina Story Quilt.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data concerning the academic achievement in the areas of vocabulary development and reading comprehension, the researchers have come to the following conclusions.

- The direct teaching of vocabulary words chosen by the researchers from the literature selections resulted in a steady growth in vocabulary by the students.
- The wide variety of activities that were developed and implemented for each unit led to the development of a better understanding of the story: which in turn enabled a significant majority of the students to score in the top quartile on the comprehension test.
- Even though the students grew in vocabulary and expanded their background knowledge, the results from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey show that this had little or no effect on the students' interest in reading.
- The researchers found, that as a result of the activities planned to increase vocabulary and improve comprehension, some of the students also improved in both their intrapersonal and interpersonal skills as shown through their increased involvement in group discussions, more reflective journal writing, and more active participation in cooperative learning activities and interactive story reading. However, some students still experienced difficulties in the above areas at the end of the implementation.

- Even though most of the students were able to verbalize their thoughts about the literature selections, many still had difficulty responding to questions in written form.
- The researchers found that there was a link between the amount of improvement by the students in the targeted areas and the amount of time spent in the direct teaching of the skills needed to improve vocabulary and reading comprehension: more time--more improvement.

Based on the above finding, the researchers would like to make the following recommendations to future researchers or persons wishing to implement this program.

The researchers recommend this program if you would like to improve your students' vocabulary and increase their comprehension. It worked well with students who are already successful readers as well as with those experiencing difficulty in reading. The units exposed the students to good children's literature, addressed student interests, and supported a theme. Vocabulary was selected that was pertinent to the story and the researchers used a variety of methods, both visual and auditory, to help the students internalize it. The direct teaching of the words, previous to and during the reading of the literature, resulted in improved student vocabularies.

The researchers suggest the following for improving comprehension; develop a wide variety of activities which involve students and keep them interested, use a variety of graphic organizers to aid the students in their thinking, plan individual and group activities that range from silent reading to parties that celebrate literature.

Finally, go into your implementation with a well defined plan, but, remain flexible and be willing to make changes and adjustments as needed to make the implementation successful. Meet with your group often to discuss problems, successes, and changes that may need to be made. The quote that says, "...the best laid plans...often go astray," certainly pertains to action based research.

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Appendix A

READING ROOTS INITIAL ASSESSMENT RECORD

****

Student's Name_____Date_____
School_____ Teacher_____Assessor_____

****

Warm -up

_____

_____

Student writes his/her name in above area.

Oral Assessment

Letter Names (Circle correct responses.)
m a s d t i n p g o c k
Number Correct:_____

Letter Sounds (Circle correct responses)
m a s d t i n p g o c k
Number Correct:_____

Word List (Circle correct responses)

1. sad
2. Sam
3. mad
4. sat

Number Correct:_____

5. like
6. the
7. and
8. dad

Assessor Note:
If a student knows fewer than 5 letter names, or fewer than 5 letter sounds, assign him or her to Lesson 1.
If a student knows more than 5 letter names and 5 letter sounds, move on to the Reading Roots Eight Week Assessment. (Do not administer the Phonetic Spelling section.)
If a student passes story 1 or above, assign him or her to the level indicated by his or her score.
If the student does not pass story 1, assign him or her to begin at Shared Story 4.

Appendix A (continued)

READING ROOTS ASSESSMENT STORY RECORD FORM

****

Student's Name_____Teacher/Grade_____
School_____Date_____Tester_____

****

Story 1: Lesson 1-5 (20 words)
Teacher: This story is about a boy and his dog. You have been (or will be) reading about them. Read the story and see what it says.

Matt sat.
Sad Sam sat.
Sad Sam is a dog.
Sad Sam likes Matt.
Dad likes Sad Sam.
Sad Sam is happy.

___1. who is Sad Sam? (a dog)
___2. Who are Sad Sam's friends? (Matt and/or Dad)

Go on if student has less than five word errors and no more than one comprehension error.

****

Story 2: Lessons 6-10 (39 words)
Teacher: Sometimes the characters in our stories make a big mess. Read this story to find out what happens.

Miss Sid sits in the tree.
Miss Sid is on the top.
Miss Sid sees Pit-Pat.
Pit-Pat sits on a pad.
Miss Sid sees Don.
Don sees the paint pot.
Miss Sid flies.
Miss Sid tips the paint pot!
Mat gets the mop.

___1. Where does Miss Sid sit? (in a tree)
___2. What does Don see? (a paint pot)
___3. What happens to the paint pot? (Miss Sid tips it over)

Go on if student has less than seven word errors and no more than one comprehension error.

Appendix A (continued)

Story 3: Lessons 11 through 15 (49 words)
Teacher: Someone else makes a mess in this story! Read to find out what happens.

Ann and Don sit in the sand at the pond.
Ann and Don can hear a frog singing.
Don is patting Sad Sam.
Sad Sam likes to dig in the mud.
Don says, "NO, Sad Sam. You must sit."
Sad Sam did not sit.
Sad Sam dug in the mud.

___1. Where are Don and Ann sitting? (on the sand/at the pond)
___2. What did Don tell Sad Sam? ("Sit,"/"Do not dig.")
___3. What does Sand Sam do? (digs in the mud)
Go on if student has less than seven word errors and no more than one comprehension error.
****

Story 4: Lessons 16-20, (50 words)
Teacher: The sun is shining in Lana's bedroom window. She is just waking up. Fang has been running around outside. Lana's mom just let him in. He can't wait to say good morning to Lana. What do you think happens?

Lana is snug in her bed.
Fang skids into the bed fast.
He bumps Lana.
He falls in her lap.
He steps on her leg.
He licks her neck.
Lana is mad.
The bed is bent!
Lana says, "Mom, get Fang!
He landed on the bed. He is a pest!"

___1. What does Fang do? (bumps into Lana's bed/falls on Lana/licks Lana)
___2. How does Lana feel? (mad)
___3. What does Lana do? (calls her mom)

Go on if student has less than seven word errors and no more than one comprehension error.

Appendix A (continued)

Story 5: Lessons 21-25 (73 words)
Teacher: Bob didn't want to be late to school today. Miss Stanton's class was getting a brand new fish tank. Let's read to find out what Bob and his friend Megan did to help with the new fish tank.

Bob and Megan rushed to class.
The kids peeked into the big glass tank.
Miss Stanton said, "The tank needs fish."
Bob held up his hand.
Megan help up her hand.
Bob and Megan asked, "Can we help? A fish shop is near the school."
Miss Stanton nodded.
Bob and Megan rushed to the shop.
The kids got a red fish, a pink fish, and ten shells.
"We have all we need," said Bob.

___1. Why do Megan and Bob rush to class? (they want to see the new fish tank./They don't want to be late.)
___2. Why do Megan and Bob go to the fish shop? (to get fish)
___3. What do Megan and Bob get at the fish shop? (a red fish, a pink fish, and 10 shells)

Go on if student has less than seven word errors and no more than one comprehension error.
****

This type of testing continues thorough nine stories. The assessor reads the introduction, the student reads the story and answers the question. Placement in a reading level group depends on the point where the student stops having success.

Appendix A (continued)

READING ROOTS ASSESSMENT
READING WORD RECORD FORM

List 1 Lessons 1-5	+	-
Dad		
Sam		
Mart		
sad		
likes		
sat		
is		
and		
it		
was		
Total		

List 2 Lessons 6-10	+	-
pat		
mop		
tips		
in		
pot		
pad		
Miss Sid		
Don		
sees		
the		
Total		

List 3 Lessons 11-15	+	-
can		
mud		
pond		
kiss		
ant		
sitting		
tug		
sock		
says		
he		
Total		

List 4 Lessons 16-20	+	-
stop		
fast		
best		
log		
bed		
fun		
send		
fill		
luck		
skip		
Total		

List 5 Lessons 21-25	+	-
class		
slip		
hill		
hummed		
ship		
rushed		
rang		
rested		
seeds		
leash		
Total		

LIST 6 Lessons 26-31	+	-
grin		
scream		
jump		
soft		
help		
jam		
van		
tried		
cupcake		
dive		
Total		

LIST 7 Lessons 32-37	+	-
tiptoe		
robe		
yell		
mice		
chase		
day		
when		
trace		
pail		
wind		
Total		

LIST 8 Lessons 38-42	+	-
draw		
path		
those		
queen		
quick		
fight		
could		
room		
whole		
bright		
Total		

List 9 Lessons 43-48	+	-
haze		
coast		
glow		
sixteen		
cook		
chirp		
dark		
box		
blue		
cute		
Total		

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Appendix B

San Diego Quick Assessment Test
Society for Developmental Education

Two words wrong is instructional reading level
One word wrong is independent reading level

Preprimer level	Primer	First	Second	Third	Fourth
see	you	road	our	city	decided
play	come	live	please	middle	served
me	not	thank	myself	moment	amazed
at	with	when	town	frightened	silent
run	jump	bigger	early	exclaimed	wrecked
go	help	how	send	several	improved
and	is	always	wide	lonely	certainly
look	work	night	believe	drew	entered
can	are	spring	quietly	since	realized
here	this	today	carefully	straight	interrupted

Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth	Ninth
scanty	bridge	amber	capacious	conscientious
certainly	commercial	dominion	limitation	isolation
develop	abolish	sundry	pretext	molecule
considered	trucker	capillary	intrigue	ritual
discussed	apparatus	impetuous	delusion	momentous
behaved	elementary	blight	immaculate	vulnerable
splendid	comment	wrest	ascent	kinship
acquainted	necessity	enumerate	acrid	conservatism
escaped	gallery	daunted	binocular	inventive
grim	relativity	condescend	embankment	jaunty

Tenth	Eleventh
zany	galore
jerkin	rotunda
nausea	capitalism
gratuitous	prevaricate
linear	risible
inept	exonerate
legality	superannuate
aspen	luxuriate
amnesty	piebald

Assessment for Individualization

Appendix B (continued)
San Diego Assessment Story Samples

Level 1-C

Dave and Tom live in a large city. They live with ther father and mother. Ther house is near a park. Many boys play football in the park.

Dave and Tom like to play football there too. Dave can run faster than Tom.

Dave and Tom's mother goes to school. She is going to be a teacher. Her school is far from ther home. She goes in a car.

Level 2-A

Bob and his father like to work on old cars. His father has five old cars that belong to him. One of them is black with a white top.

Bob is very young, so none of the cars belong to him. He would like to have his own car when he gets big.

Sometimes Bob and his father go to a car show. At the car show there are many old cars.

One time Bob's father took his black and white car to the car show. One on the men looked at the cars to see which one was best. He gave Bob's father a prize because his car was so pretty.

Level 3-C

Judy's class was going on a trip to visit an airport. Before they left, they read some books about airplanes and airplane pilots. Everyone in the class was excited when it came time to go.

The class rode to the airport in a big yellow bus. After the bus stopped, the first person to get off was Judy's teacher. She told the class that they must all stay together so that none of the students would get lost.

First, they visited the ticket counter and learned how passengers buy ther tickets. Then a pilot came and told them he would take them on a large airplane. After they were inside the airplane everyone was surprised because it was so large. When Judy's class got back to school they all said they wanted to visit the airport again.

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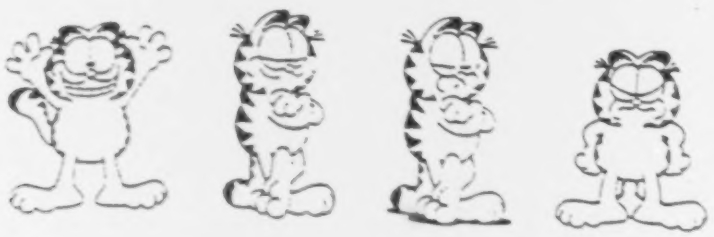
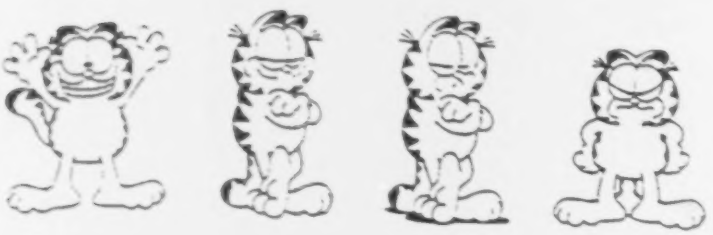
Appendix C

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?



2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?



3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?

4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?

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Appendix C (continued)

5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?

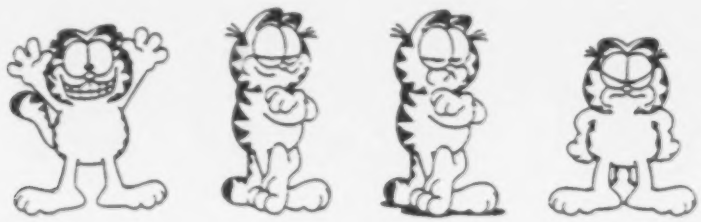
6. How do you feel about starting a new book?

7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?

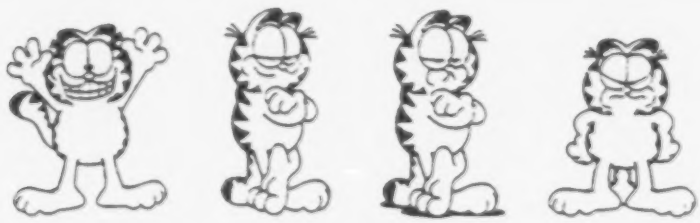
8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?

Appendix C (continued)

9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?

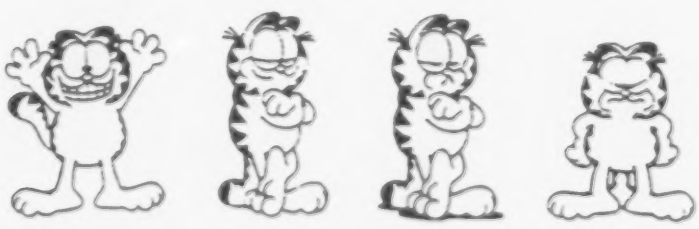


10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



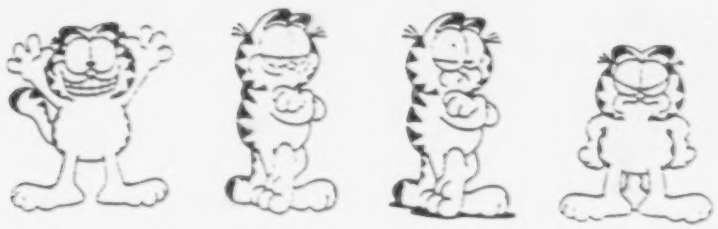
11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?

12. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?



Appendix C (continued)

13. How do you feel about reading in school?



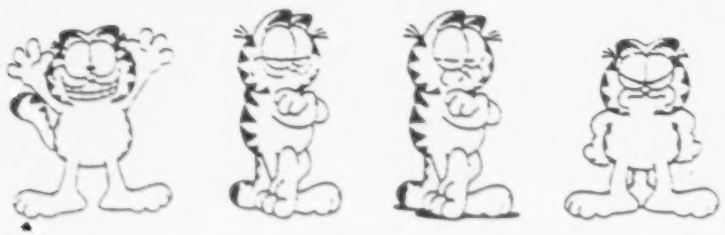
14. How do you feel about reading your school books?

15. How do you feel about learning from a book?

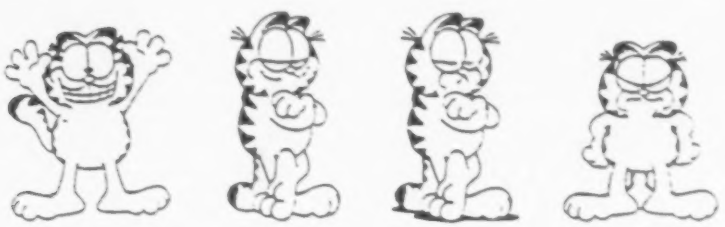
16. How do you feel when it's time for reading class?

Appendix C (continued)

17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?



18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?



19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?

20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?

Appendix C (continued)

Name _____ Date _____

Teacher _____ Grade _____

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
Scoring sheet

Scoring guide	
4 points	Happiest Garfield
3 points	Slightly smiling Garfield
2 points	Mildly upset Garfield
1 point	Very upset Garfield

Recreational reading		Academic reading	
1.	____	11.	____
2.	____	12.	____
3.	____	13.	____
4.	____	14.	____
5.	____	15.	____
6.	____	16.	____
7.	____	17.	____
8.	____	18.	____
9.	____	19.	____
10.	____	20.	____
Raw score:	____	Raw score:	____

Full scale raw score (Recreational + Academic) ____

Percentile ranks: Recreational ____

Academic ____

Full scale ____

Pretest	20	12	10	13	55 students
Posttest	10	7	9	6	32 student

Overall Interest in Reading According to Quartiles on Pretest and Posttest

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Appendix C (continued)
Parent Consent Form for Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

September 3, 1996

Dear Parents,

We are currently enrolled in a graduate program at St. Xavier University. The focus of our work is improving reading comprehension and vocabulary. In order for children to improve in reading, it is essential for them to have an appreciation of and a love for reading. In order to find out about your child's interest in reading, we will be giving a Reading Attitudes Survey. This survey will not be graded, it will not influence class participation, and it is strictly voluntary. All results will be kept strictly confidential.

We are attaching a copy of the questionaire for you to review. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Your signature will be required for your child to participate in the questionaire. Please return the form below indicating whether your child will be participating. Thank you for your cooperation.

Mrs. M. Brooks
Ms. L. Hamann
Mrs. M. Vetter

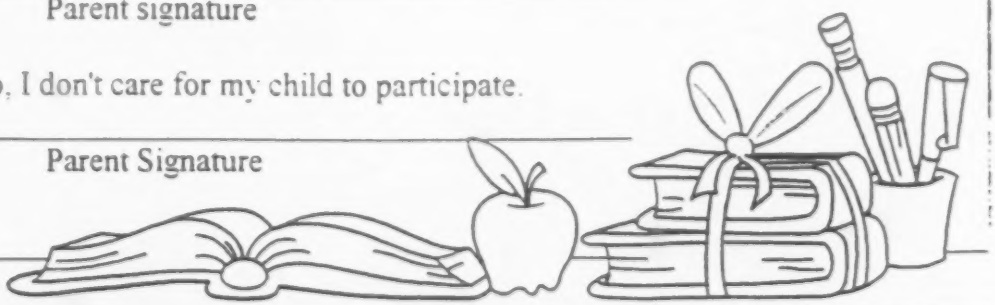
Child_____

Yes, my child may participate in the Reading Attitudes Survey.

_____
Parent signature

No, I don't care for my child to participate.

_____
Parent Signature



Appendix D
Sample Weekly Lesson Plan

The following literature selections were used throughout the implementation following a similar plan.

The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree by Gail Gibbons: (1984), San Diego, Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich.

Apple Pickin' Time by Michele Benoit Slawson: (1994), New York: Crown.

Johnny Appleseed by Steven Kellogg: (1988), New York: Morrow Junior Books.

The Biggest Pumpkin Ever by Steven Kroll: (1984), New York: Holiday House.

The Monster Bed by Jeannie Willis and Susan Varley: (1986), New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.

The After School Monster by Marissa Moss: (1991), New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak: (1963), New York: Harper & Row.

Josefina Story Quilt by Eleanor Coerr: (1986), New York: Harper & Row.

Lesson Plan

Literature selection: Apple Pickin' Time

Weeks' Objectives

1. Students will add to their current vocabularies by using the new vocabulary words in meaningful sentences.

2. Students will practice making predictions, drawing inferences, and summarizing the story.

3. Students will increase their knowledge of apples and how they are harvested.

4. Students will learn about products made from apples by tasting them throughout the week.

Appendix D (continued)

5. Students will learn about different kinds of families and how they make their living.

6. Students will practice the skills of putting things in alphabetical order, sequencing events in a story, and choral reading.

Vocabulary:

Words to be developed through visuals, group discussion, selection of sentences from literature books, and by the writing of the student's own meaningful sentences.

fruit	frost	foreman	ticket
canvas	bin	congratulations	tractor
balance	procession	market	migratory worker

Daily Plans

Day One:

*Give vocabulary pretest to determine students' prior knowledge of words.

*Introduce vocabulary words. Have a short discussion of them.

*Introduce book, discuss author and illustrator.

*Make predictions about the story. Record student response on chart paper. As story is read, refer back to these to determine if predictions were correct.

*Introduce this week's poem, "Apple Treats" by Rochelle Nielsen-Barsuhn, by reading it to the students. Familiarize the students with any unfamiliar vocabulary words.

*Finish day by having a treat of apple cider.

Appendix D (continued)

Day Two:

*Review vocabulary: Develop meaningful sentences for the first 4 words as a group activity. Then have students write their own sentences in their mini-dictionaries.

*Review predictions made in day one.

*Set purpose for reading: for information, for pleasure

*Teacher reads the story for the first time using an interactive story reading format: read, discuss, predict, read.

*Reread poem--this time with the teacher. (The students have a book of poems collected by the researchers that address the theme of the unit.)

*Sing song: "A Little Apple Seed" (author unknown).

*Finish the day by having apple cider doughnuts.

Day Three:

*Review:

purpose for reading

vocabulary

story sequence/events

*Select next four vocabulary words and follow the same plan as listed on day two.

*Read story again. Check comprehension through questions and discussion.

*Do activity: "Tree to Market" (Sterling, M.E., (1990), Thematic Unit: Apples, Huntington Beach, CA: Teacher Created Materials).

This is a cut and paste activity for sequencing the steps an apple goes through on a trip from the orchard to the market.

Appendix D (continued)

*Finish the day by sampling applesauce.

Day Four:

*Review

vocabulary

story sequence and events

check for comprehension

*Write meaningful sentences for remaining words.

*Do activity: Read and color a mini-book, "Six Big Apples," that tells the story of what happened to six apples.

*Have apple cookies as a treat.

Day Five:

*Give vocabulary posttest.

*Give comprehension test

*Have apple butter on crackers as a treat.

Appendix D (continued)

Sample Vocabulary Test (same test was given as pretest and posttest)

Name_____

Date_____

1. Cider
____a kind of apple
____a drink made from apples
____the center of the apple

2. Honeybee
____bees that get nectar from blossoms to make honey
____bees that make paper hives
____bees that sting you when you are on the playground

3. Wreath
____a necklace made out of apple blossoms
____a decoration made in the shape of a circle
____a branch of an apple tree

4. Arrangement
____the blossoms of an apple tree
____colored leaves on a tree
____the way flowers and branches are put in a vase

5. Shelter
____a cloud in the sky
____something that protects a person from the weather
____the fruit on a tree

6. Shade
____something you do to an apple so you can eat it
____a shadow made by a tree
____something you wear to bed

7. Bare
____when the branch of an apple tree is covered with blossoms
____when the branch of an apple tree is full of fruit
____when the branch of an apple tree has no leaves or fruit

8. Company
____someone who makes cider from apples
____people who pick apples
____someone or something that helps keep you from being lonely

9. Tasty
____sour
____delicious
____bitter

10. pie
____sauce made from apples
____food baked in a pastry crust
____a drink made from apples

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This test is for The Season's of Arnold's Apple Tree.

Appendix D (continued)
Sample Comprehension Test

This test was for The Biggest Pumpkin Ever

1. What two things did Clayton and Desmond want to grow the pumpkin for?
_____a contest and a jack-o-lantern
_____a pumpkin pie and a jack-o-lantern
_____a contest and a pumpkin pie

2. Why didn't Clayton and Desmond ever see one another in the garden?
_____They were working in two different gardens
_____One worked during the day the other at night
_____They were not friends

3. What did they both do to make the pumpkin grow?
_____They sang to the pumpkin
_____They talked and read to the pumpkin
_____They watered, fertilized, and fet it sugar water

4. How did Desmond and Clayton finally meet?
_____They went to the fair
_____They were putting blankets on the pumpkin to keep it warm
_____Their moms introduced them

5. How did the mice get the giant pumpkin to town?
_____by rolling it down the hill
_____by putting it in a red wagon
_____by using a 100 field mice on motorcycles

6. Tell in your own words how Desmond and Clayton both got their wish for the pumpkin at the end of the story.

_____
_____
_____

Appendix E
Lesson Plan for Completing a Venn Diagram

Objective: Students will compare and contrast the events found in the following literature selections: Johnny Appleseed by Aliki and Johnny Appleseed by Steven Kellogg.

Objective: The class will complete a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts the two stories.

Procedure:
The teacher will read the two literature selections to the students.
Two think-pair-share activities will follow as the students discuss the events of the two versions of the story: one to determine how they are alike and one to determine how they are different.
After each think-pair-share activity, the teacher will list student responses on a large Venn diagram.

Evaluation:
Review literature selections to determine if all major events were included in the diagram.
Discuss how students worked with their partners in the think-pair-share activities.

Note: The Venn diagram on the following page shows one of the targeted classes finished diagram.

Johnny Appleseed
Compare/contrast

Johnny Appleseed
by Aliki
1. got sick and got better
2. did not have a contest
3. said nothing about Johnny's family
4. Johnny gave all the trees away
5. told children tales
Both Stories
1. both about John Chapman
2. Johnny got sick
3. friends with Indians
4. a friend to all animals.
5. played with bear cubs
6. pioneer who traveled wilderness
7. planted apples as he traveled
Johnny Appleseed
by Steven Kellogg
1. got sick and died
2. had a contest to see who could chop down the most trees
3. told a lot about Johnny's family
4. sold some of the trees to pioneers
5. told children tales and Bible stories

Appendix F

Sample of Mini-dictionary With Meaningful Sentences Written by Students

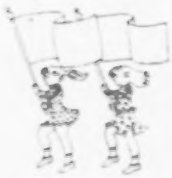
Orchard

Cider:
I drink cider, a fruit juice made from apples.

Tractor
My dad used a tractor to dig a big hole.

Honeybee
We saw the honeybees getting nectar from the apple blossoms.

Migratory worker
The migratory workers moved from place to place picking and harvesting the fruit.



Procession
Our class walked to lunch in a procession because we were in a line one behind the other.

Shade
I sat in the shade of the tree so the sun would not shine on me.

Shelter
I took shelter in the treehouse so I wouldn't get wet.

Appendix G
Semantic Map for Describing Monster Characteristics

Objective: The students will be able to brainstorm ideas about monsters.
Objective: The students will be able to classify ideas into specific categories about monsters.
Objective: The students will be able to use the thoughts generated in the semantic map to create their own monster stories.

Procedure:
1. Discuss the 4 different categories outlined in the semantic map.
2. Explain to the students that as a group they are going to brainstorm ideas about monsters and then put their thoughts into categories.
3. Taking one category at a time, have the students generate ideas and the teacher will write them down on the semantic map. Then they will move to the next category until all the categories are done.
4. Review the completed semantic map.
5. Have students use the semantic map to create a class story to serve as a model for students when writing their own monster story.

Evaluation:
Look at each category for variety and descriptive language that will aid students in the writing of their own monster story.

Class Generated Story:
Objective: The students will use the completed semantic map to generate a class story about monsters.
Objective: The students will be able to use the class story as a model when creating their own story.

Procedure:
1. Review class generated semantic map.
2. Discuss elements of story: setting, characters, problems, and solution.
3. Decide what things from the map can be used in this story.
4. Use student imput to compose story.
5. Read completed story and revise if necessary.
6. Review elements of story, then have students write their own story.

Evaluation:
Read stories written by students. Determine if they used the four elements of a story. Decide if their stories are readable and make sense.

Monsters

WHAT DO MONSTERS EAT?

garbage
brains
kids
people
animals
candy
dirty socks
furniture
dog and cat food
apples
vegetables
bread
bugs
any thing they want

WHAT DO MONSTERS LOOK LIKE?

ugly
dirty feet
bad breath
nasty
hairy
no clothes
different colors
funny
big horns
sharp claws
scary
stinky
strange
dusty
sharp teeth

WHAT DO MONSTERS DO?

growl
are helpful
sneak around
play
cause trouble
scare people
read books
eat people
chase people
mess up your house
have a rumpus
be mean
get tamed
can be friendly

WHERE DO MONSTERS LIVE?

attic
garbage can
bookbag
in closets
in you house
forest
castles
dungeon
school
under bed
under ground
in the basement
caves

Appendix H
Model Story Composed by Class One

The Lost Kids and the Forest Monster

One day in the afternoon, Tom and Sarah were playing by the river. All of a sudden they realized they were lost. They were in the forest far from home. They began to hear strange, loud noises.

They heard footsteps and thought it was their parents; but it was a big, ugly, red and green monster. The monster had one long, sharp tooth and sharp claws. He was hairy and fat and uglier than Oscar the Grouch.

He tried to scare them by roaring, rolling his eyes, and showing his one tooth and eight claws.

Tom and Sarah were scared, but they stood up to the monster. The monster felt very sad and bad. He wanted to help them find their parents. They looked for their parents by the river and found them. They thanked the monster and all of them became friends.

Appendix I
Unit Plan for Josefina Story Quilt

Purpose:

The purpose of this unit is to use a piece of literature to help explain what it was like to travel on a wagon train across the country in 1850 with your family and a pet you loved. We will make comparisons between life and moving today with life and moving in 1850. Since a quilt is an important part of this story, we will also discuss quilts and their uses.

Objectives:

- Students will gain an understanding of what life on a wagon train was like.
- Students will improve their map skills as they follow Faith and Josefina across the country.
- Students will learn about different kinds of quilts (patchwork, appliqué, embroidered, and pieced).
- Students will compare and contrast life and travel in 1850 and today.
- Students will learn what was needed when taking a 6-month journey across the United States in 1850.
- Students will keep a reaction journal that compares events in their lives with those in Faith's.
- Students will work in various size groups for different activities.
- Students will keep a learning log to help them recall the events of the story.
- Students will learn many new vocabulary words that pertain to the story.

Materials:

The following materials will be needed preceding and during this series of connected lessons.

Literature Book: The Josefina Story Quilt by Eleanor Coerr

Monthly issues of quilting magazines

United States map

Oregon/California Trail map

Series of questions for guided story reading

Appendix I (continued)

Visual cues: pictures of land along trail, pictures of wagon trains, pictures of wagons and the things they contained, quilt squares

Vocabulary/meaning cards

Quilt patterns

Supplementary books about wagon trains and quilts:

Wagon Wheels by Barbara Brenner

The Patchwork Quilt by Valerie Flournoy

Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt by Deborah Hopkinson

The Pioneers by Marc and Douglas Gorsline

Quilt Story by Tony Johnston and Tomie dePaula

...If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon by Ellen Levine

The Lessons

Day One:

- Have a brainstorming activity to see how much the students do know about traveling west in 1850.
- Give pretest over vocabulary for chapter one.
- Introduce the book.
- Make predictions about what you thing the story is going to be about.
- Students will record the answers to these questions in their journal. What do you think this book is about? Look at the cover and the title. Think about what is happening, then write your prediction.
- Introduce vocabulary for the first chapter.

Appendix I (continued)

Day Two:

- Review predictions.
- Read aloud Chapter 1 to students. The teacher will ask questions and students will make predictions as the story is read.
- In learning log, students will write an answer to this question. What things did you learn about learn about Faith and her family in this chapter?
- Review vocabulary as it was used in the story. Write words in sentences in the vocabulary booklets.
- Make a prediction as to what you think will happen in the next chapter.
- Color the quilt pattern, Triple Sunflowers, that is the visual cue for this chapter.

Day Three:

- Begin by reviewing the events in chapter 1 and predictions for Chapter 2.
- Give pretest on vocabulary for Chapter 2
- Mark point on map where wagon train begins and follow trail as the chapters progress.
- Introduce vocabulary and develop definitions and sentences.
- Read Chapter 2 to students using the read, discuss, predict, read pattern.
- Write in journal: How would you feel if you had to leave your favorite things or pet behind when you moved?

Day Four:

- Review chapter 2.
- Write in learning log: Why do you think the author chose to have Faith make a wagon wheel patch to tell about this chapter?

Appendix I (continued)

- Do activity: If you were a child leaving on a wagon train in 1850, and were only able to pack 10 things to take with you, what would you pack? Before beginning activity, have a brief discussion about what you couldn't take (T.V., video game, etc.) Record your choices by words or pictures on the picture of the covered wagon.
- Write in journals: How do you think you would feel if you were a member of Faith's family and were setting out on this journey?
- Give Chapter 3 vocabulary pretest.
- Make predictions for chapter 3.

Day 5:

- Read Chapter 3 to students. Discuss events of story.
- Write in learning logs: What was the "trouble" the author wrote about in this chapter?
- Write in journals: After the incident with the dog, do you think Josefina should have been sent away? Why or why not?
- Write vocabulary words for this chapter in sentences.
- Color the quilt block that goes with this chapter: Circle Round the Wagons.

Day 6:

- Review events from yesterday's chapter and make a class prediction: Do you think Josefina will get into any more trouble?
- Give Chapter 4 vpcabulary pretest.
- Read aloud Chapter 4 to students. Discuss events.
- Write in journals: Have you ever seen or heard of a rescue? Put yourself in Faith's place, and tell what you think you would have done to save Josefina and Adam.

Appendix I (continued)

- Continue drawing trip on maps--discuss significance of quilt patch at the beginning of the chapter, Moon over the Mountain.
- The author states that at this point in the story; Faith has made 15 quilt squares about events that have happened along the way. In this chapter she adds two more: Moon over the Mountain and Egg in a Nest.
- Write in learning logs: Josefina gets in trouble again in this chapter. Tell, in your own words, why she had to be rescued and what happened after she was.
- Color the two quilt squares for this chapter.
- Give pretest for Chapter 5 vocabulary.

Day 7:

- Review all events that have happened to this time.
- Introduce Chapter 5 vocabulary and write the words in sentences.
- Do interactive story reading of Chapter 5.
- Discuss seasonal changes taking place as story proceeds.
- Write in learning logs: Tell how Josefina helped the family in this chapter called "Robbers."
- Write in journals: Do you think Faith's mother should have traded the quilts to the Indians for food and water? Why or why not?
- Color the Desert Rose quilt square

Day 8:

- Give vocabulary pretest for Chapter 6.
- Read to students, Chapter 6: Good-bye Josefina. Discuss what happened to Josefina and to the family.
- Write in journal: How do you think you would feel if you were Faith and discovered that Josefina had died protecting you and your family?

Appendix I (continued)

- Color Pine Tree quilt block.
- Color Josefina quilt block.

Day Nine:

- Write in learning log: Tell in your own words how the story ended. Tell what happened to Josefina and to the family. Tell what Faith did with all the quilt blocks she made along the way.
- Connecting it all together: Go over again the events of the story. Write in journal. Do you think you could have walked or endured riding in a covered wagon for over 2000 miles and 6 months like Faith, her family, and thousands of others that made the trip west in 1850?
- Color the last quilt block, Log Cabin.

Day 10:

- Make a final entry in journal: Connecting the story: Write your own story that tells about a move that your family made. Did you have to leave something behind that you loved? Was moving day exciting or scary? How long did it take? Where did you move?
- Combine journals and logs into one booklet.
- Arrange quilt blocks on a large sheet of paper to form a paper quilt.

Day 11:

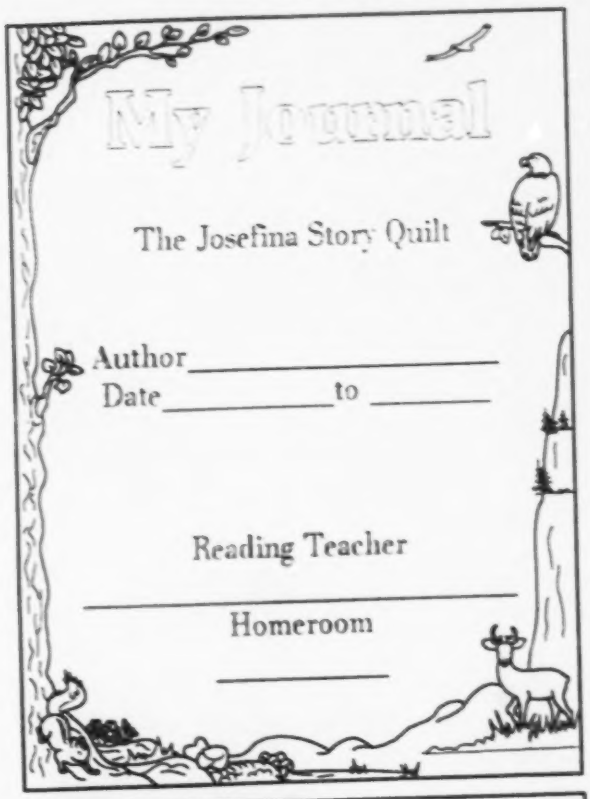
- Review the vocabulary words
- Give vocabulary posttest.
- Finish assembling quilts.

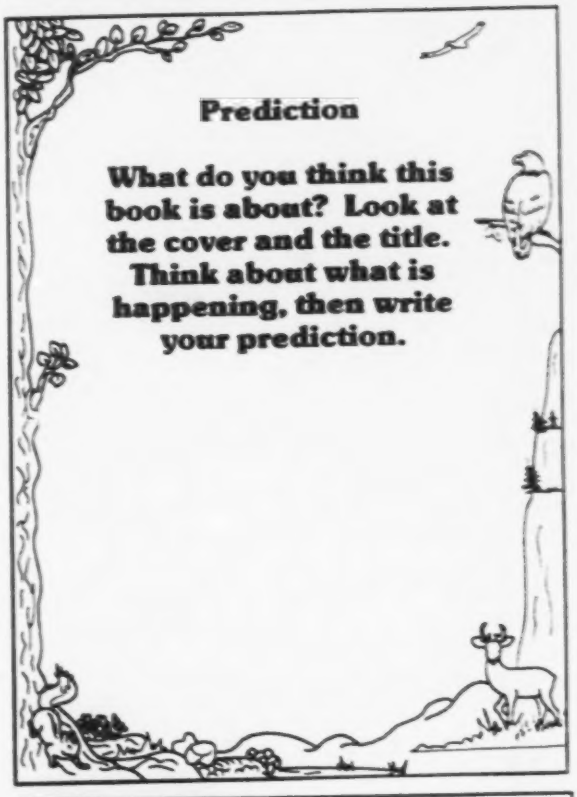
Day 12:

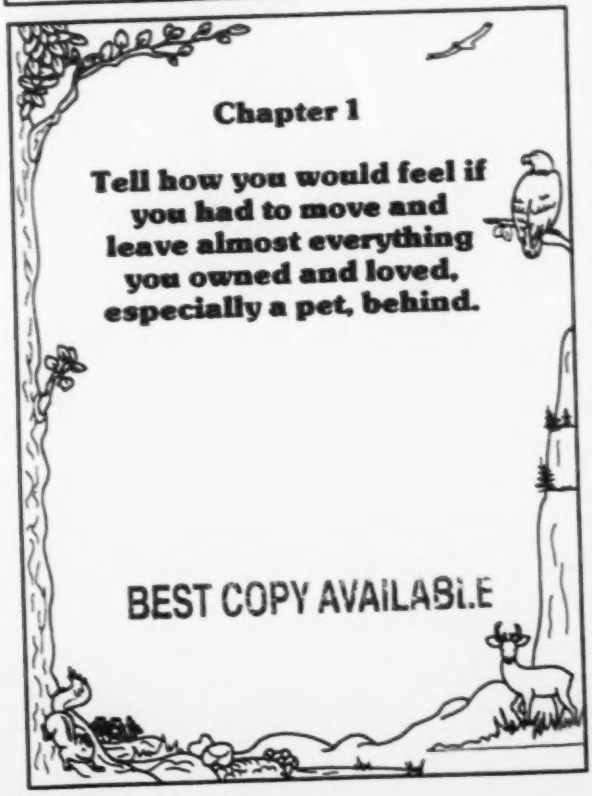
- Review story events.
- Give comprehension test.

Evaluation: Use a connecting wagons activity to review what the big ideas was, how it connected to your prior knowledge, and how your could use it in other areas of study.

Appendix J
Reduced Copy of Student Journal for The Josefina Story Quilt




Prediction
What do you think this book is about? Look at the cover and the title. Think about what is happening, then write your prediction.


Chapter 1
Tell how you would feel if you had to move and leave almost everything you owned and loved, especially a pet, behind.

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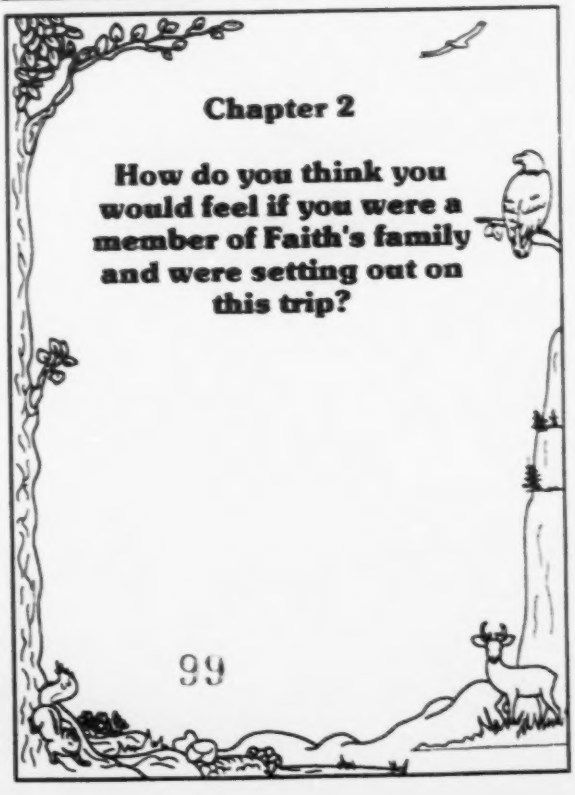
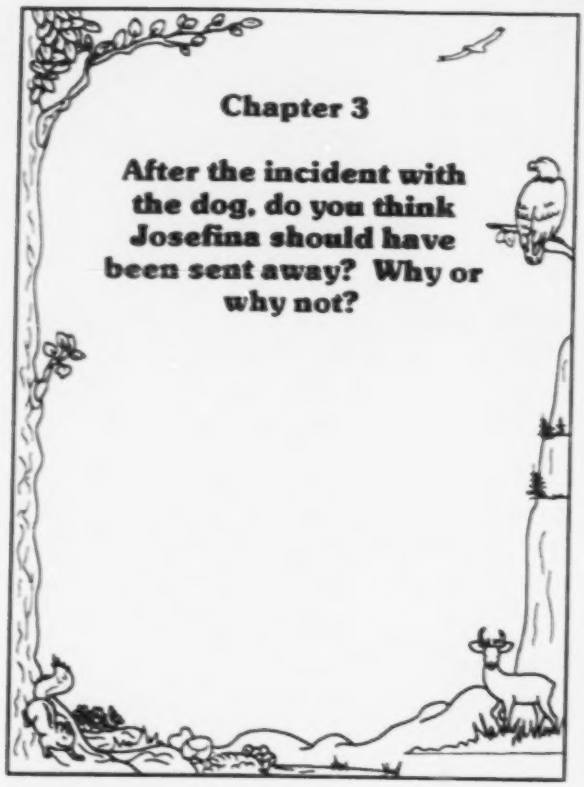
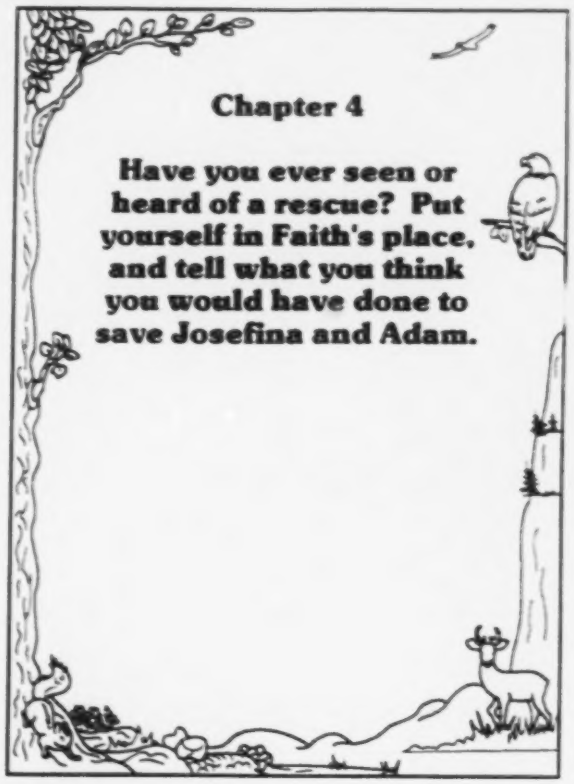
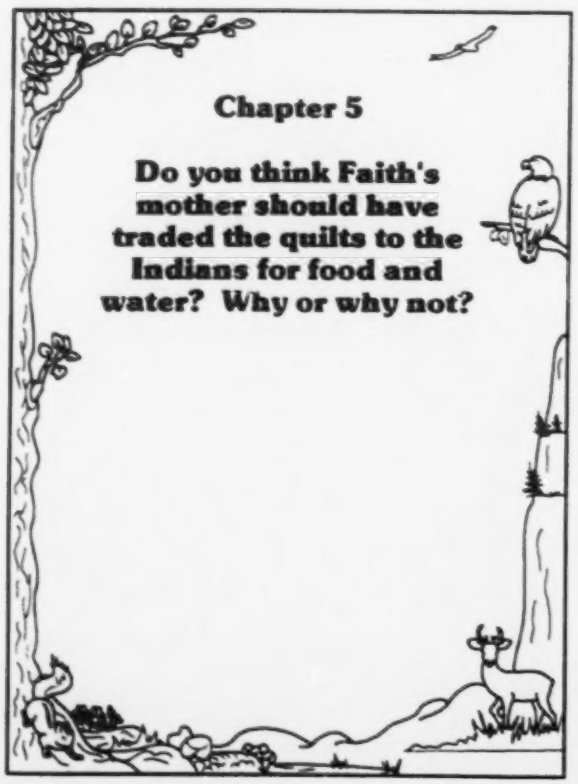
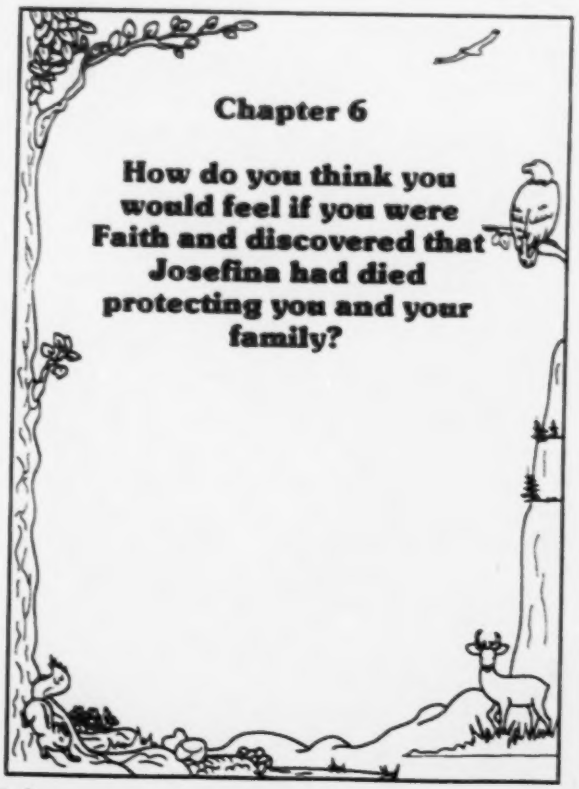


Appendix J (continued)

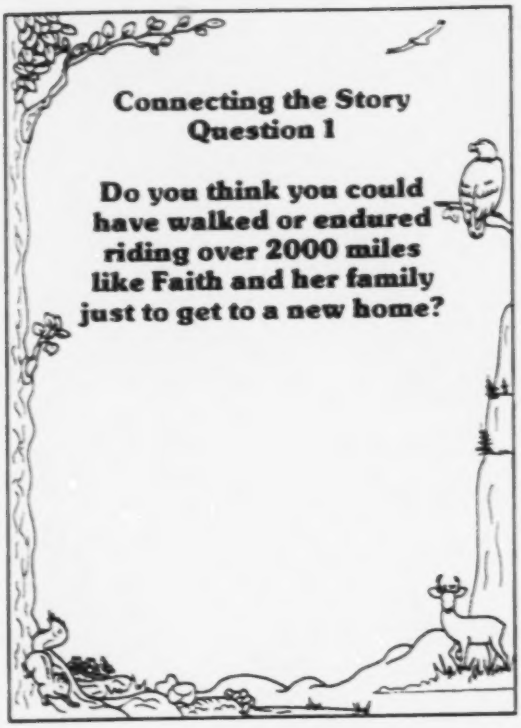


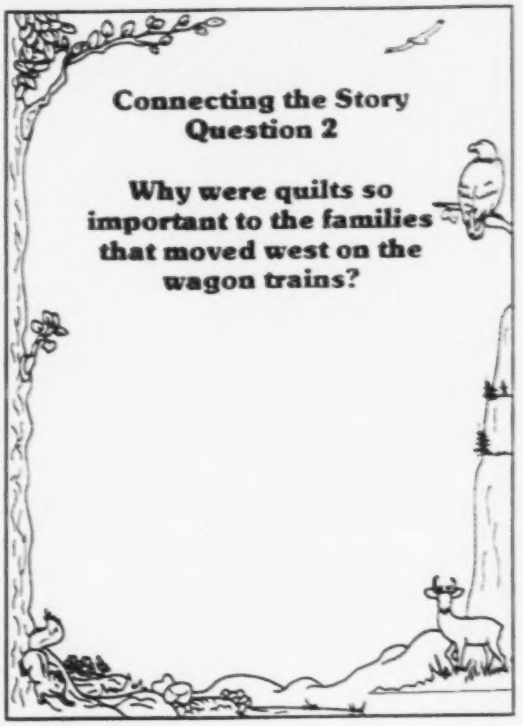

Chapter 4
Have you ever seen or heard of a rescue? Put yourself in Faith's place, and tell what you think you would have done to save Josefina and Adam.

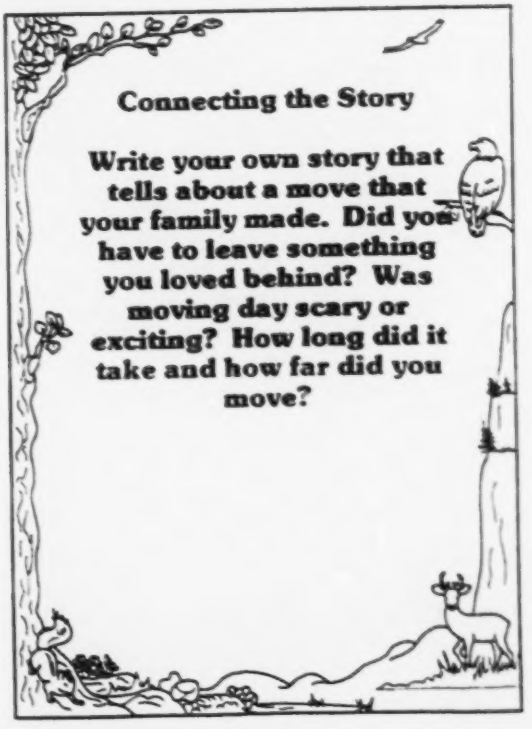



Chapter 6
How do you think you would feel if you were Faith and discovered that Josefina had died protecting you and your family?

Appendix J (continued)

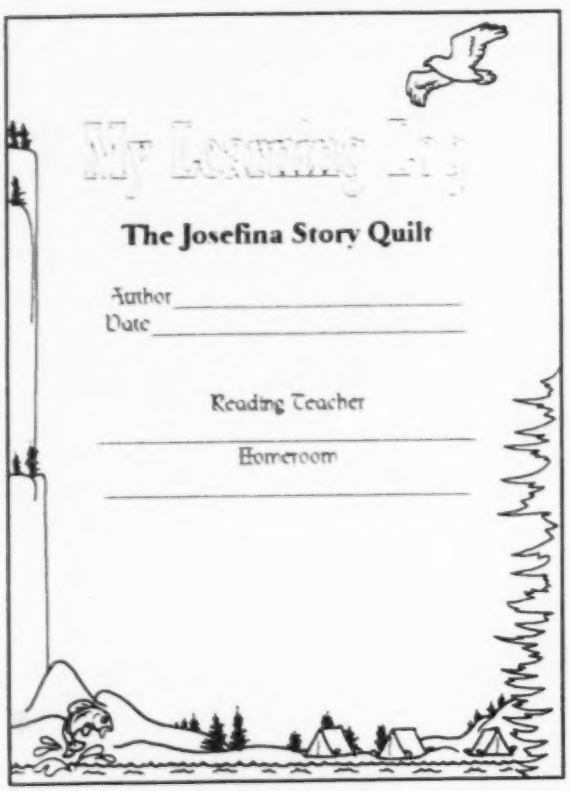

Connecting the Story
Question 1
Do you think you could have walked or endured riding over 2000 miles like Faith and her family just to get to a new home?

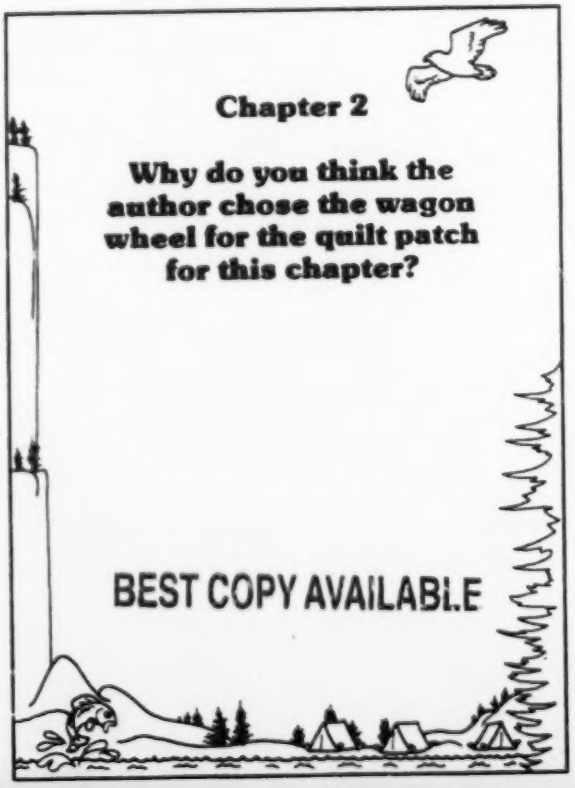



Connecting the Story
Write your own story that tells about a move that your family made. Did you have to leave something you loved behind? Was moving day scary or exciting? How long did it take and how far did you move?

Appendix K

Reduced Copy of Student Learning Log for The Josefina Story Quilt





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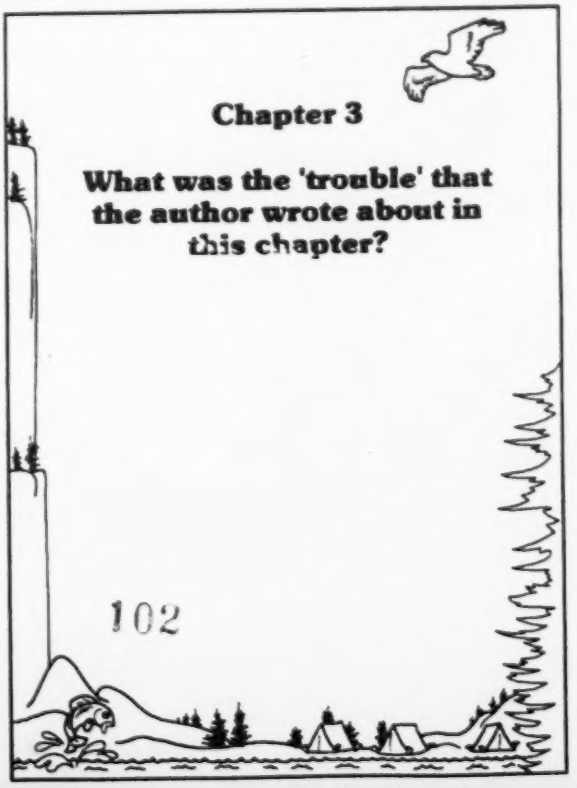
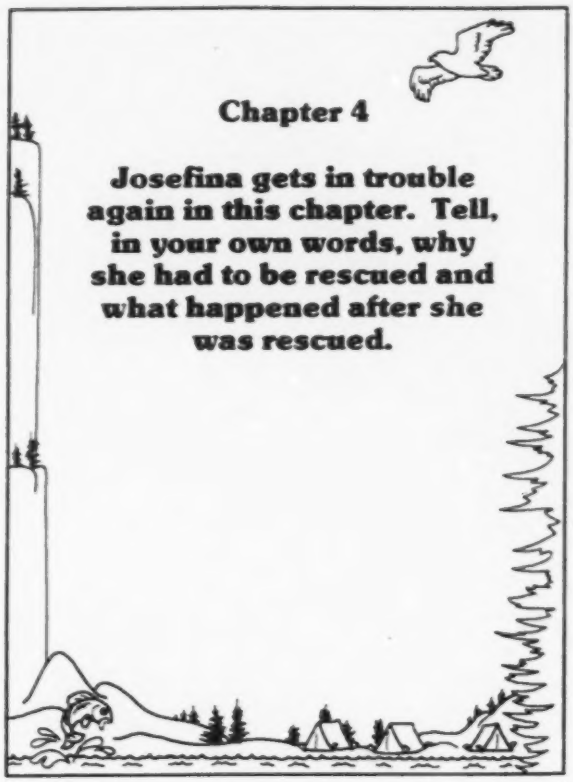
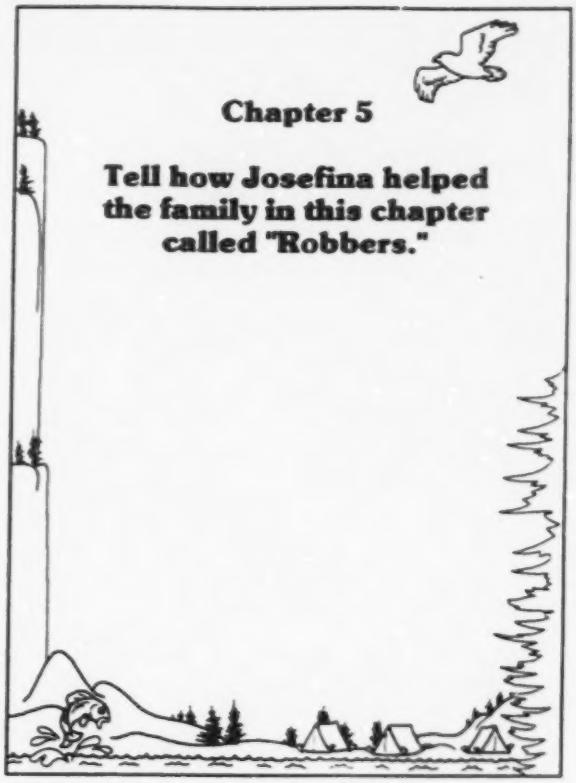
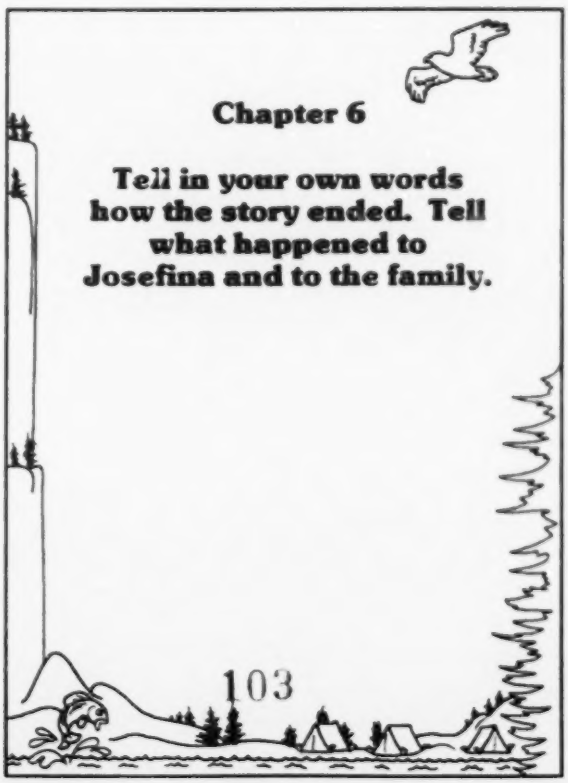


Appendix K (continued)

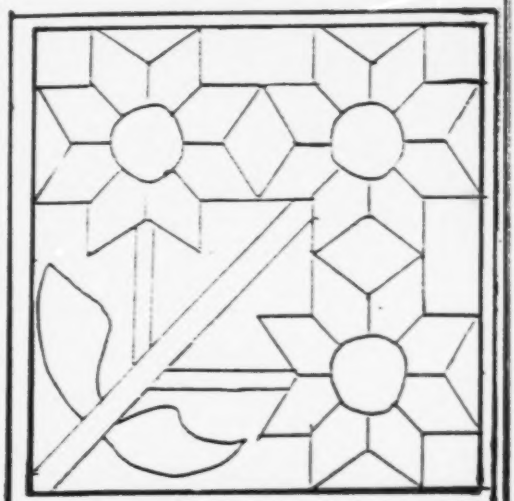

Chapter 4
Josefina gets in trouble again in this chapter. Tell, in your own words, why she had to be rescued and what happened after she was rescued.



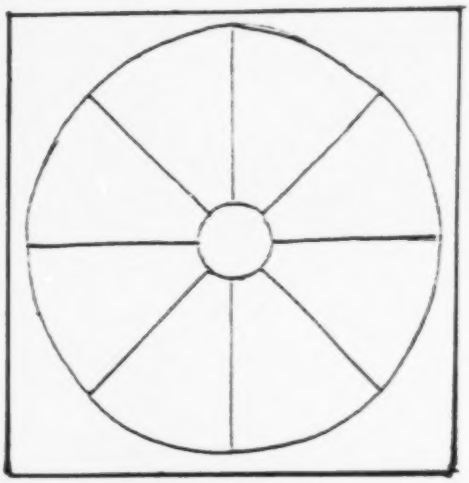


Appendix L
Quilt Blocks Used as Visual Cues for Each Chapter

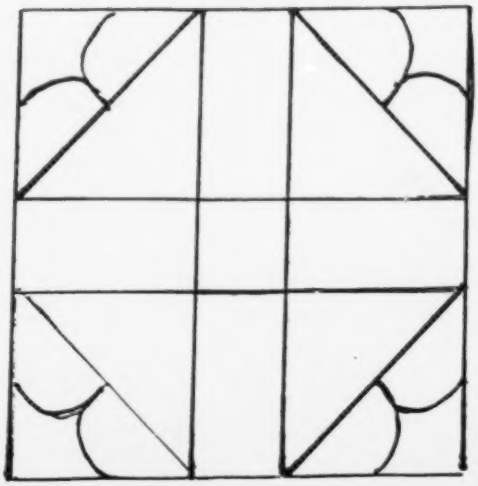
The Josefina Story Quilt
Quilt Block
Triple Sunflower



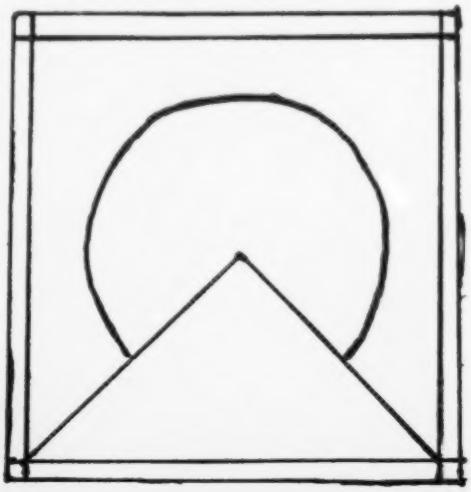
The Josefina Story Quilt
Quilt Block
Wagon Wheel



The Josefina Story Quilt
Quilt Block
Wagons Round the Campfire

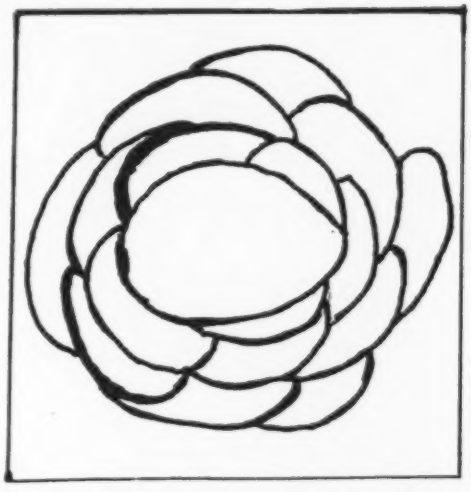


The Josefina Story Quilt
Quilt Block
Moon Over the Mountain

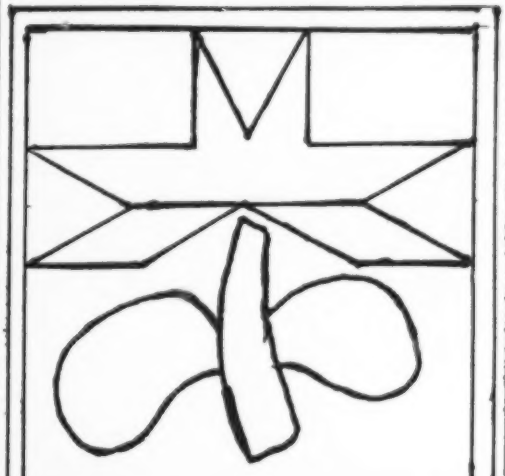


Appendix L (continued)

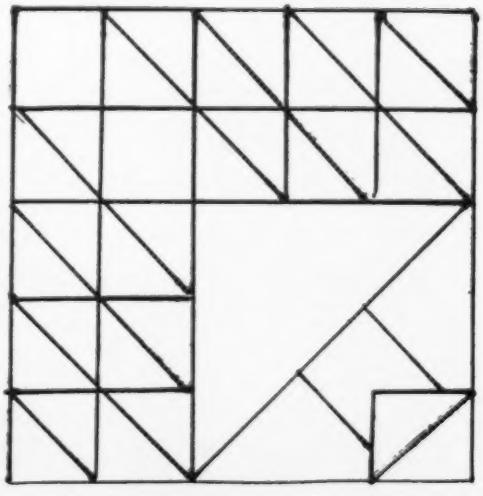
The Josefina Story Quilt
Quilt Block
Egg in the Nest



The Josefina Story Quilt
Quilt Block
Desert Rose



The Josefina Story Quilt
Quilt Block
Pine Tree



The Josefina Story Quilt
Quilt Block
Josefina